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Understanding Music's Theological Significance

A Kantian Approach

James Vernon Jirtle

Durham University

2010

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Abstract

Jeremy Begbie speaks of music as 'theologically loaded': as conveying a sense of intrinsic theological significance. This thesis explores the possibility that music is theologically loaded in an epistemological sense: that music is dependent on knowledge of God. Modern epistemologies, in which knowledge is constructed by the individual human mind, pose a challenge to such a conclusion, since even if divine knowledge is possible it would appear irrelevant for our understanding of objects, such as music, that can be known directly through experience. Because Immanuel Kant presents a particularly stringent theory of human-mind-dependent knowledge, we can use his aesthetic theory as an analytical tool both to assess the epistemological content of our aesthetic judgements as they relate to musical beauty, and to consider whether theological knowledge can be relevant to these judgements.

Applying Kant's aesthetic theory to musical beauty, we find that from within, music seems sublime — defying our ability to understand its form or predict its structure — while from without it remains clearly intelligible. This unique construction makes our judgements of musical beauty particularly dependent on what Kant calls a 'common sense': a principle that, although outside our cognition, nevertheless plays a constitutive role in our aesthetic judgements by ensuring their universal validity. The dependence of our aesthetic judgements on this common sense allows for the possibility that musical beauty is dependent on knowledge of God — even when considered within a human-mind-dependent epistemology — and thus enables us to give an account of music's theological significance that is consistent with modern theories of knowledge. Considered within a Christian perspective, this common sense forms the basis for a grammatical understanding of beauty, in which beauty represents the distance between our awareness of divine providence and our limited knowledge of God's purposes.

Understanding Music's Theological Significance

A Kantian Approach

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2010

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To Beth,

without whom 'the thesis' could never have been written.

Introduction

Elisha said, “Now bring me a musician”. And when the musician played, the hand of the LORD came upon him — 2 Kings 3:15

Elisha’s prophecy to Jehoram, the King of Israel, is one of the few instances in the Bible when music is explicitly mentioned in connection with what we might call a religious experience: the ‘hand of the Lord’ coming over the prophet. Biblical references to music as an act of worship are much more frequent: the Psalmist repeatedly exhorts us to ‘Sing unto the LORD’,¹ and King David — in addition to traditionally writing many of the Psalms — makes particular provision for musicians among the ranks of priests.² Yet we also find music accompanying instances of revelation: the story of Elisha, the opening of the seven seals in the Book of Revelation,³ and the entry of the Ark of the Covenant into Solomon’s temple.⁴ This last example is particularly interesting because it is only as ‘the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD’ that ‘the house of the LORD was filled with a cloud... for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God’. Here, as with Elisha, music is portrayed as capable of facilitating a relationship between God and creation, functioning not only as a human offering *to* God, but also as a medium for divine revelation *from* God to humanity.

¹ See e.g. Ps. 9:11; 30:4; 33:2; 47:6; 66:1; 67:4; 68:4; 68:32; 81:1; 95:1; 96:1; 98:1; 98:4; 100:2; 105:2; 135:3; 147:1; 149:1.

² 1 Chron. 15:16.

³ Rev. 5:9–13.

⁴ 2 Chron. 5:13.

A sense that music provides a unique locus for the theological appears repeatedly in subsequent philosophical and theological discussions of music. As George Steiner observes, ‘Music and the metaphysical, in the root sense of that term, music and religious feeling, have been virtually inseparable’ throughout Western history.⁵ Music is singled out from among the other arts as having a special relationship with the theological. This view is echoed by the French theologian Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), who writes that ‘music perhaps more than any other art gives us an enjoyment of being’.⁶ While all art gives us ‘an enjoyment of being’, Maritain suggests that there is something about music that makes it particularly capable of functioning in this way. Likewise, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) argues that ‘it is precisely to religious feeling that music is most closely related’,⁷ and Martin Luther (1483–1546) states that ‘next to theology there is no art which is the equal of music, for she alone, after theology, can do what otherwise only theology can accomplish, namely, quiet and cheer up the soul of man’.⁸

This association between theology and music persists in contemporary scholarship. Recent contributions by theologians to the interdisciplinary study of music and theology include the works of Jeremy Begbie — notably, *Theology, Music and Time* (2000) and *Resounding Truth* (2007) — Andrew Love’s *Musical Improvisation, Heidegger, and the Liturgy* (2003), the Archbishop’s Report on Church Music, *In Tune with Heaven* (1992), as well as various engagements with music in the wider area of theology and the arts, including contributions from David Brown, Richard Viladesau, and others. Musicological interest in theology has largely been focused on historiographical and ethnological issues, such as Daniel Chua’s *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (1999) and Michael Spencer’s *Theological Music* (1991), although a number of contemporary composers, including John Tavener and John Adams, have also explicitly commented on the theological dimensions of their music.⁹

⁵ George Steiner, *Real Presences* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), 216.

⁶ Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (London: Sheed & Ward, 1946), 125.

⁷ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve: Dialogue on Incarnation*, trans. T. N. Tice (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1967), quoted in Philip Stoltzfus, *Theology As Performance* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 83.

⁸ Letter to Ludwig Senfl (1530). The word ‘art’ in this quotation is slightly misleading from a modern perspective, because although Luther is clearly contrasting music with other technical disciplines, including those we would consider fine arts, in a Medieval context the term also includes academic subjects like geometry, mathematics, and grammar. Thus, his comment reflects music’s importance relative to both the fine arts and the ‘liberal arts’ of the Medieval curriculum.

⁹ See, e.g., John Tavener, ‘Toward a Sacred Art’, in *The Sense of the Sacramental*, ed. D. Brown and A. Loades (London: SPCK, 1995).

1. Musical Beauty and Knowledge of God

1.1 Ways of Investigating Theology and Music

These examples, drawn from both modern and historical sources, suggest that there is an inherent affinity between music and theology; that music has an intrinsic and somehow unique capacity for religious import. Begbie describes this as a ‘gut feeling that many have about music: that it is in some special way religiously or theologically “loaded” (or at least particularly well suited to religious purposes) and that this is confirmed by the often intimate links between music and religion in history’.¹⁰ Our task will be to explore whether we can identify any specific theological or musicological basis for this ‘gut feeling’ by analysing music in the Western tradition alongside Christian theology. Begbie’s statement indicates that music and theology seem to be connected intrinsically, with their association throughout history symptomatic of a more fundamental affinity. Assuming the accuracy of this description, we will not be able to understand the relationship between music and theology by simply documenting the historical and sociological function of music in religious worship, or arguing that the connections between the two have been forged by repeated cultural correlation. Instead, our goal will be to develop an understanding of music and theology that accounts for an inherent correspondence between the two, while admitting that it is possible to view this pairing as the repeated reinforcement of chance associations.

Even within these initial parameters — that we will use the Western musical tradition and Christian theology to explore an intrinsic relationship between music and theology — a number of possible approaches remain. David Brown, for example, argues that the world exists in a sacramental relationship with its creator, and that music, in turn, points sacramentally beyond itself towards God; music’s theological significance is derived from the relationship of creation, in general, to its creator.¹¹ Trevor Hart, on the other hand, analyses the activity of human creation and finds an implicit relationship between musical composition and God’s creative activity, since creativity ‘is not only a proper response to, but also an active sharing in (albeit in a distinct and entirely subordinate creaturely mode) God’s own creative activity within the

¹⁰ Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (London: SPCK, 2007), 17.

¹¹ David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2004); David Brown, *God and Grace of Body: Sacrament in Ordinary* (Oxford University Press, 2007); David Brown, *God and Mystery in Words: Experience Through Metaphor and Drama* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

cosmos'.¹² Art and theology are thus linked because the creation of art is an inherently theological act.¹³ Although Hart does not connect his theory to trends in musicological research, it mirrors the interest of 'new musicology' in the political ramifications of musical performance — in which the musical act is likewise seen as inherently related to issues of power and morality.¹⁴

Another possibility is that music is related to theology on an epistemological level: that our perception of music is dependent on *knowledge of God*. This is the argument of Augustine's (AD 354–430) *De musica*, the first extended Christian discussion of music.¹⁵ Augustine's question is slightly different from ours: rather than attempting to show why music is theologically loaded, he is interested in discerning how music might be used to further a Christian engagement with God. Even so, through an analysis of how we perceive musical beauty he demonstrates that such perception depends on knowledge of divine perfection. Augustine remarks on the fact that we are able to recognise the true form of a musical composition, and the beauty present in it, despite the inevitable imperfection of the performance. We cannot, therefore, be judging musical beauty on the basis of what we hear alone, but must also have access to a standard whereby we are able to both discern the imperfections of musical performance, and generate the music's true form. 'From where', Augustine asks, 'should we believe that the soul is given what is eternal and unchangeable, if not from the one, eternal and unchangeable God?'¹⁶ Augustine thus articulates an epistemological link between our understanding of music and knowledge of God: we cannot perceive musical beauty without being oriented towards a divine standard of perfection.

1.2. Outline of an Epistemological Approach

Although studies of the historical association between music and theology, or the moral and political ramifications of musical activity, are extremely interesting, it is this additional and largely unexplored possibility — that our perception of musical beauty

¹² Trevor Hart, 'Theology Through the Arts: Hearing, Seeing and Touching the Truth', in *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation Through the Arts*, ed. J. Begbie (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 18.

¹³ Similar theological theories about the nature of human artistry vis-à-vis divine creation are found in Jeremy S. Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991); Anthony Monti, *A Natural Theology of the Arts: Imprint of the Spirit* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2003); Joseph Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today*, trans. M. M. Matesich (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996).

¹⁴ Alastair Williams, *Constructing Musicology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2001), ix.

¹⁵ There are currently two translations of *De musica* into English: a critical translation of book VI by Martin Jacobsson (Stockholm: Elanders Gotab, 2002), and a translation of all six books by R. Catesby Taliaferro in *The Fathers of the Church* 4, 169–384 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947).

¹⁶ Augustine *De musica*, 6.12.34.

is inherently dependent on theological knowledge — that we will investigate here. Augustine provides an example of this approach, but his conclusions rely on a theory of knowledge that is incompatible with certain fundamental principles of modern epistemology, thus undermining the persuasiveness of his argument within a contemporary context. While we will explore the differences between Augustinian and modern epistemological theories in greater detail below, a summary will be useful here. In Augustine's epistemology, knowledge is ultimately found beyond our cognition in the mind of God. This divine truth is revealed to our minds through a process of introspection and revelation: looking within, we discern our relationship to the God that encompasses all things and all knowledge. As he writes in *De Magistro*, 'When we have to do with things which we behold with the mind, that is, with intelligence and with reason, we speak of things which we look upon directly in the inner light of truth which illumines the inner man and is inwardly enjoyed... [We are taught] by the things themselves which inwardly God has made manifest to him'.¹⁷ Our judgements are only valid insofar as they agree with the ultimate source of truth and perfection: viz., the divine mind. For Augustine, knowledge is *objective*, in the sense that it is rooted in an object other than ourselves (God).

In contrast, many modern epistemological theories emphasise the constitutive role of the human subject in the construction of knowledge, thus presenting a *subjective* orientation.¹⁸ The human mind is not subservient to a divine standard of truth and perfection, but actively involved in the generation of knowledge that is consequently dependent, to a greater or lesser extent, on the knowing subject. This is true within both modern and postmodern thought. Alistair Williams describes modernity as shaped by the contention that 'human beings are subjects who interact with the world of objects, comprehending them according to shared perceptual apparatus, and thereby regulating both themselves and the world around them', while postmodernism 'questions the confidence of such assumptions, asking whether the subject can really understand the world and itself so transparently, and enquiring whether universal values represent the values of the powerful imposed on the less powerful'. In both cases, knowledge is viewed as

¹⁷ Augustine *De Magistro*, 12.40.

¹⁸ It is in this sense — denoting an epistemology in which knowledge is human-mind-dependent — that I will use the term 'subjective', rather than to indicate opinion or contingency. It is important to note, however, that Kant's use of this term is often inconsistent. 'Objective', on the other hand, will refer to knowledge or features that exist independently of our minds in particular objects. I have retained these terms, despite the potential for confusion, for two reasons: because of their prevalence in Kant's thought, and because it is difficult to replace either with another, single word.

dependent on human activity and not, as Augustine would maintain, derived from a human-mind-independent source of divine illumination.¹⁹

Begbie summaries this modern view as an epistemology in which ‘creativity... displaces or swallows up the notion of discovery’; where truth is created by the subject rather than discerned externally, either in nature or in God.²⁰ As might be expected from such a negative assessment, Begbie views modernity’s emphasis on the subjective creation of knowledge with suspicion, and advocates instead for an investigation of ‘how God’s shaping of the world might shape our own’.²¹ While a more dynamic understanding of knowledge, in which God’s creation and human activity interact, may be necessary, the idea that the subject plays a determining, constitutive role in the construction of knowledge continues to be influential, as I will show below, within both theology and musicology. Thus, an Augustinian understanding of music’s theological significance, which relies on an epistemological system at odds with theories of knowledge in which the subject plays a constitutive role, is of limited relevance within contemporary theological and musicological discourse.

If Augustine cannot be used — at least without extensive modification — we must find another point consistent with a subjective view of knowledge from which to consider whether music is indeed dependent on knowledge of God. The figure responsible for this contemporary epistemological emphasis on the subject, according to Begbie, is Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who not only questions the feasibility of using an external locus of truth, but develops a robust philosophical system — transcendental idealism — in which knowledge is actively constructed by the individual human mind.²² Kant also formulates an aesthetic theory, principally in the *Critique of Judgment*, that provides a basis through which to consider judgements of beauty in relation to his subjective epistemological claims. While other, subsequent philosophers would also relate aesthetics to issues of epistemology — notably Georg Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Friedrich Nietzsche — there are a number of reasons to prefer Kant when discussing music’s theological significance. In the first place, the epistemological theories developed by these philosophers, along with their understandings of aesthetics, are in many ways inherently contrary to Christian claims about God. Hegel and Schopenhauer, for example, both verge on pantheism (although Hegel is keen

¹⁹ Williams, *Constructing Musicology*, x.

²⁰ Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 239.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 187.

²² *Ibid.*, 349n3.

to avoid this label), and Nietzsche paints the arts and knowledge as means of bringing about the 'death of God'.²³ Kant, on the other hand, develops his aesthetic theory out of a subjective epistemology, but, as we will see, in a way that is not so fundamentally inimical to Christian claims about the independence, providence, and omnipotence of God, even though his thought presents its own theological challenges.

Secondly, Karl Ameriks points out that, unlike Hegel, Schopenhauer or Nietzsche, Kant does not attempt to present a 'grand system of the world', but instead insists on limits to what can be known from a subjective epistemological perspective.²⁴ As I will discuss in relation to musicological research below, this humility with regard to grand, unifying claims is consistent with a postmodern scepticism of 'metanarratives' — i.e., determining interpretations — thus making Kant's philosophical system, rather than those of subsequent philosophers, more easily understood in relation to modern epistemological attitudes. The point of transcendental idealism is to explore the conditions of possibility for subjective knowledge: the 'formal conditions of experience'.²⁵ As a consequence, we can use Kant's analysis to illuminate the conditions required for, say, the universality of aesthetic judgements without imposing, from the beginning, any particular judgement, or, indeed, even accepting that judgements of beauty *are* universally valid. Kant provides a means of investigating subjective epistemological claims, which characterise both modern and postmodern thought, while not requiring the dogmatic assertion of any particular truth; defining, in other words, *if* knowledge of the world is possible from a subjective perspective, *then* what logical conditions must be met.

This is, arguably, not how Kant himself viewed his philosophy, and the purpose of this thesis is not to demonstrate any historical conclusions about Kant's own thought. Rather, it is to use transcendental idealism as a hermeneutic tool for understanding music's theological significance in a way that is consistent with a subjective epistemological perspective. As we will discover, Kant's critical philosophy, particularly his aesthetic theory, can be employed to critique subjective understandings of musical beauty in a way that allows us to relate these to knowledge of God. By using Kant's aesthetic theory as a lens through which to explore our perception of musical beauty, music can

²³ Frederick C. Beiser, *Hegel* (London: Routledge, 2005), 142–6.

²⁴ Karl Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's Critiques* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 327. Although, as Paul Guyer observes, this 'Kantian humility' is not, perhaps, as humble as it appears (Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* [Cambridge University Press, 1987], 333).

²⁵ Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 446.

be seen to reflect an implicit dependence on theological knowledge. Unlike many other forms of art, music functions within a Kantian aesthetic as a free beauty, on a par with the beauty of nature. Through an investigation of why Kant believes this to be the case, and in what ways musical beauty is particularly like the beauty of nature, we can arrive at an understanding of the relationship between musical beauty, nature, and theology that provides a basis for understanding music's theological significance in a way that, unlike Augustine's *De musica*, is also consistent with an epistemological emphasis on the subject.

1.3. Relating Kantian Aesthetics to Theological Knowledge

For those acquainted with Kant's thought, the idea that it might be used to construct an epistemological understanding of music's theological significance may seem odd. Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that Kant marks 'a watershed in the history of theology', but not in positive terms: rather, Kant's thought is seminal for theological discourse because his epistemological claims seem to make 'God-thought' and 'God-talk' impossible.²⁶ 'Ever since Kant', he writes, 'the anxious questions, "Can we? How can we?" have haunted theologians, insisting on being addressed before any others'.²⁷ The nature of this Kantian challenge to theological knowledge will be discussed in greater detail below, but it can be summarised as having two key components. In the first place, because knowledge is constructed by the human mind, it would seem impossible to have knowledge of something, like God, that is inherently beyond human comprehension. Secondly, even if theological knowledge is possible, it is of limited relevance for our understanding of objects and experiences that are within our ability to comprehend, since knowledge of these can be constructed by our independent human minds.

These problems of knowledge and relevance must be addressed if we are to use Kantian aesthetics as a framework for understanding, on an epistemological level, how music is theologically loaded. The first, I will suggest, is adequately answered by placing theological knowledge within the interpretive context provided by particular communities of faith. The second issue of relevance, however, is somewhat more intractable. In this thesis, I will argue that aesthetic judgements within Kant's aesthetics are implicitly dependent on knowledge that, like theology, lies beyond the limitations of his subjective epistemology. Kantian aesthetics thus functions as what Peter Berger

²⁶ Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Is It Possible and Desirable for Theologians to Recover From Kant?', *Modern Theology* 14:1 (1998), 15.

²⁷ Ibid.

terms a ‘signal of transcendence’: an experience that reflects a world-view implicitly dependent on knowledge that cannot be induced from experience.²⁸ This implicit dependence on knowledge from an external source allows theological conclusions to play a constitutive role within a Kantian epistemology. Music, in turn, is also a signal of transcendence; a fact emphasised by its unique features: particularly, the way in which seems to be, in Kantian terms, a free beauty alongside nature.

To a certain extent, the validity of a Kantian approach must be demonstrated through its application to the question of music’s theological significance, a task that will occupy the main body of our discussion. Even so, this introduction must provide the groundwork for what amounts to a substantial underlying thesis: that Kant’s aesthetics produces insights into the nature of musical beauty and its relationship to theology that remain compelling for both contemporary theologians and musicologists. This topic has already been introduced, but must be expanded upon in the discussion below. To this end, we will discuss the impact of Kant’s epistemological claims on theological knowledge and their consistency with trends in contemporary musicology before proceeding to formulate the structure of our investigation. First, however, we must document the nature of these claims and of Kant’s philosophical system, a task to which we now turn.

2. Transcendental Idealism

2.1. Philosophical Context

Transcendental idealism develops in a philosophical milieu shaped, in large part, by two conflicting epistemological methods: the empiricism of David Hume (1711–76) and the rationalism of Descartes (1596–1650).²⁹ In the tradition of his predecessors in British philosophy, notably John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, Hume is wary of giving knowledge a philosophical existence independent of particulars. Scotus had argued that ‘universals’ — concepts specifying categories of objects rather than individual instances — are not greater in perfection than the objects they categorise, as a Platonic view would maintain, but actually possess less reality than individual objects.³⁰ Calling something a ‘plant’ provides less information than referring to it as ‘flower’ or simply exhibiting the object. Ockham took this scepticism to another level

²⁸ Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1969), 53.

²⁹ Paul Guyer, ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, ed. P. Guyer (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

³⁰ Stephen D. Dumont, ‘Transcendental Being: Scotus and Scotists’, *Topoi* 11:2 (1992), 139.

by denying the reality of universals all together, a position known as nominalism.³¹ It is not simply that 'plant' has less meaning than the actual object it categorises, but rather that the idea of 'plant' is given meaning by such specific instances, and has no existence apart from them.

Hume's innovation is to extend this philosophical pointillism beyond universal concepts to include our experiences of causation.³² We cannot know that it is by kicking a ball that we make it move, only that balls generally do move when kicked. There is a debate over whether Hume intends to redefine causation as precisely this empirical observation of regular correlation between two events, or whether his critique of causation is entirely sceptical.³³ In any event, causation cannot be demonstrated with certainty on the basis of an external source, i.e., the world. Instead, if knowledge of causes exists, it is mental, based on converting empirical observations of correlation into mental ideas of logical connection. This is not to say that the world might not, in reality, exhibit causal connections, only that our perception of causation is insufficient evidence on which to base such a conclusion. Hume thus moves towards understanding human knowledge as limited in such a way that we cannot, on the basis of reason alone, determine the reality of things such as causation in the external world.

While Hume gives epistemological primacy to our empirical observations, and thus questions the reality of mental constructs like the idea that our actions *cause* the ball to move, Descartes takes the opposite approach, retreating from the empirical world into what he considers to be the certain knowledge discernible through individual minds. Like Hume, Descartes distrusts the epistemological foundations inherited from Scholasticism, in which knowledge would seem to be either founded on faith in God, or else confined to the limited empirical statements of nominalism. Even nominalism, however, requires faith that our observations are accurate; what if, Descartes asks, our perception is being altered by an evil demon?³⁴ In that case, even our empirical observations would not be epistemologically secure. But we would still

³¹ Marilyn McCord Adams argues that Ockham does in fact believe that concepts have a 'nonreal mode of existence as objects of thought' (Marilyn McCord Adams, 'Ockham's Nominalism and Unreal Entities', *The Philosophical Review* 86:2 [1977], 144). Whether or not this is the case, Ockham's philosophical legacy is decidedly nominalist.

³² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), 56.

³³ Or, as Simon Blackburn argues, whether a mediating, quasi-realist interpretation is preferable (Simon Blackburn, 'Hume and Thick Connexions', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50:Supplement (1990)).

³⁴ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. J. Cottingham (Cambridge University Press, 1996), §1.

know that we think, and therefore exist, an observation that leads to Descartes' most famous dictum: *cogito ergo sum*.³⁵ From this point of epistemological clarity, Descartes completes his philosophical system by quickly demonstrating the existence of God, whom he uses in turn to provide an epistemological basis for the certainty of our empirical observations by arguing that a good God would not allow an evil demon to deceive us.³⁶ Most subsequent commentators, including Hume, have found fault with Descartes' ontological proof, and thus with his claims to have established knowledge of the external world from the fact of our subjective thought.³⁷ We may know that we exist, but, from Descartes' account, can discern little else.

2.2. Kant's Epistemological Perspective

Although both Hume and Descartes question the links between human understanding and the external reality of the world, neither makes the transition into a completely subjective epistemology, in which knowledge — including knowledge of the world — is redefined as something inherently human-mind-dependent. Kant, on the other hand, asserts precisely this: that knowledge is not dependent on objects, but that objects are instead determined by our cognition. Kant likens this change to the Copernican revolution, which similarly opened up whole new domains to science through a shift in perspective: 'Failing of satisfactory progress in explaining the movements of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that they all revolved round the spectator, [Copernicus] tried whether he might not have better success if he made the spectator to revolve and the stars to remain at rest'.³⁸ Paul Guyer argues that, in comparing himself to Copernicus, Kant was not far from the truth: 'At the philosophical level of the transformation of the Western conception of a human being from a mere spectator of the natural world and a mere subject in the moral world to an active agent in the creation of both, no one played a larger role than Immanuel Kant'.³⁹ Kant's thought creates a distinction between human knowledge and the natural world, with the former no longer directly derived from the latter, and thus establishes what Guyer and Begbie both identify as a key feature of modern epistemologies: the

³⁵ Ibid., §II.

³⁶ Ibid., §III. Descartes seems untroubled by the license given to Satan by God in the biblical story of Job.

³⁷ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), §I.

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), Bxvi; as is customary, pagination is given for the first (A, 1781) and second (B, 1787) editions.

³⁹ Guyer, 'Introduction', 3.

idea that knowledge is actively created by the human mind, and not passively received from, or discovered in, external objects.

Kant begins his *Critique of Pure Reason* with a restatement of the problem of universals: to understand our perceptions (intuitions) we need pre-existing concepts by which we can determine what we perceive. By *concept*, Kant means a mental 'representation of what is common to several objects'; i.e., a universal. Concepts have both matter and form. 'Matter' refers to specific elements subsumed under the universal idea, generally expressed in propositional terms (as mental representations),⁴⁰ while their form is the simple fact of their universality.⁴¹ The problem with concepts, as mental constructs used in the *construction* of knowledge from our perceptions, is that they cannot simply be derived from these perceptions but must be, in a sense, pre-existent. So, for example, we cannot see red as a 'colour' without already having the idea of 'colour' in our minds. But where does this idea come from? In traditional metaphysics, 'It has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to objects'. Thus, in an objective account of universals, colours contain or point towards a universal idea of 'colour' that is perceived in or through each individual instance. 'Colour' has an objective existence outside our minds, and is perceived in external objects. The problem with this approach, Kant maintains, is that it has been thoroughly exhausted by late-Medieval philosophy, in which the reality of objective universals was either severely diminished or, with nominalism, eliminated entirely. As he observes, 'On that presupposition [that cognition conforms to objects]... all our attempts to establish something about them a priori, by means of concepts through which our cognition would be expanded, have come to nothing'.⁴²

Instead, Kant suggests we consider 'whether we shall not make better progress in the problems of metaphysics if we assume that objects conform to our cognition'.⁴³ Unity, rather than being an objective feature of the world, is made dependent on the a priori structures of our minds. The ideas of space and time, which underlie any concept of causation, represent ways in which we relate distinct objects of our experience.

⁴⁰ Kant is inconsistent about the connection between concepts and linguistic propositions. While concepts are generally propositional, in his discussion of beauty Kant introduces the idea of 'indeterminate concepts', which are precisely those concepts without propositional content (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 340). Unless otherwise noted, 'concept' will refer to the standard type that implies propositional meaning, so that 'non-conceptual', in turn, is roughly synonymous with 'non-propositional'.

⁴¹ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, trans. J. M. Young (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.1.1.n1, 591.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

They are modes of our perception, not objective features of the world: ‘Space is not something objective and real... nor is it a substance, nor an accident, nor a relation; it is, rather, subjective and ideal, it issues from the mind in accordance with a stable law as a scheme, so to speak, for co-ordinating everything which it senses externally’.⁴⁴ Even so, as Christopher Insole notes, that fact that space and time are subjective does not make them any less real, but simply indicates that they should be understood as ‘relations that only attach to the form of our intuition alone, and thus to the subjective constitutions of our mind, without which these predicates could not be ascribed to anything at all’.⁴⁵ Kant solves Hume’s problem of causation by insisting that the logical connections between causes and effects that we construct are what *actually constitute knowledge of causation*. Thus, we do not *discover* causation in the world, but instead *impose* causal links onto our pointillistic, empirical observations.

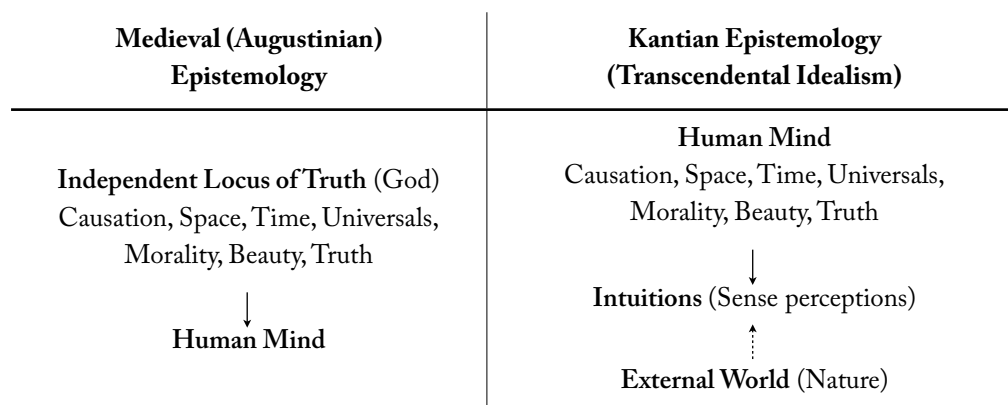


Fig. 1 — Diagram of Medieval (Augustinian) and Kantian epistemologies. In the former, knowledge is ultimately independent of our minds, located in nature and, preeminently, God. Human knowledge is discovered in these external sources, and is true insofar as it agrees with them. In transcendental idealism, on the other hand, knowledge resides primarily within human cognition. We understand the world through the imposition of this subjective knowledge onto our sensory perceptions (intuitions), while the connection between these and external objects *in themselves* remains uncertain.

2.3. Newtonian Investigation of Cognition

Ameriks provides another perspective on the motivations behind Kant’s philosophical approach, relating transcendental idealism to what he identifies as three major strands in modern philosophy: ‘skepticism, scientism, and classical modern systematic

⁴⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Inaugural Dissertation*, trans. W. J. Eckoff (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2007), 2:403, quoted in Christopher J. Insole, ‘Kant’s Transcendental Idealism, Freedom and the Divine Mind’, Unpublished Manuscript (2008), 8.

⁴⁵ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A23/B38, quoted in Insole, ‘Kant’s Transcendental Idealism, Freedom and the Divine Mind’, 8.

metaphysics'.⁴⁶ The first does not signify a position to be held in itself, so much as the orientation of modern thought towards 'providing a refutation of our continual confrontation with skepticism'.⁴⁷ The other two categories, however, represent opposed philosophical reactions to the impact of Newtonian science. On the one hand, philosophy can be understood as a "scientistic"... codification of technical knowledge'; on the other, it can be used to develop 'massive "systems of the world", each set out with many of the formal features of the new highly systematic sciences of the Newtonian era, but with ontologies... determined ultimately by philosophers alone'.⁴⁸ Ameriks suggests that, in contrast to these three strands of modern thought, Kant's transcendental idealism does not seek to battle scepticism, nor to endorse or oppose scientific knowledge. Rather, it seeks 'primarily to determine a positive philosophical relation between the frameworks of our manifest and scientific images'.⁴⁹ By assuming that both empirical observation and mental reflection contribute to knowledge, Kant attempts to reconcile the two by establishing, through a quasi-Newtonian method, the features required of human cognition given the possibility of empirical investigation, without simply taking the 'objective truth of the scientific principles themselves as an absolute first premise'.⁵⁰ Scientific knowledge is grounded in a philosophical ontology, but without becoming subservient to it.⁵¹

Thus, given the challenges of scepticism, the possibility of scientific knowledge, and the validity of philosophical reflection, Kant must determine how human cognition functions. He begins by taking the medieval doctrine of the transcendentals, in which truth, goodness and beauty are viewed as three different aspects of being or existence, and reassigning these qualities to the faculties of the mind. 'All the soul's powers and capacities', he writes, 'can be reduced to three that cannot be derived further from a common basis: the *cognitive power*, the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure*, and the *power of desire*'.⁵² The cognitive power, or understanding, relates to truth; the

⁴⁶ Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*, 327.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 327–8.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 328.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 329.

⁵¹ This approach presages Thomas Kuhn's thesis that scientific knowledge is validated within particular philosophical frameworks, or paradigms, rather than simply representing truths derived inductively from empirical observations (Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [University of Chicago Press, 1970]).

⁵² Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 177; as is customary, pagination is according to the Akademie (Ak.) edition of Kant's works.

power of desire, or practical reason, to the good; and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, or judgement, to beauty. Each of these faculties relies on an a priori principle that allows them to perform their specific function within cognition and in relation to the external world. Judgement, for example, must assume a principle of ‘purposiveness’, by which ‘we present nature as if an understanding contained the basis of the unity of what is diverse in nature’s empirical laws’.⁵³ This assumption is necessary because it is the ‘one and only way in which we must proceed when reflecting on the objects of nature with the aim of having thoroughly coherent experience’.⁵⁴ Using Ameriks’ typology as a lens, we can see how Kant’s philosophy takes the inherited philosophical tradition (being and the transcendentals) and interrogates this with respect to scepticism (removing the dependence of the transcendentals on a universal concept of being), and the possibility of scientific knowledge (positing a priori principles connecting cognition, considered philosophically, with scientific understanding).

<i>Cognitive Powers</i>	Understanding (Theoretical Reason)	Judgement	Practical (Moral) Reason
1. <i>Mental Powers</i>	cognition	feeling of pleasure and displeasure	desire/activity
2. <i>Application to</i>	nature	art	freedom
3. <i>A priori principles</i>	lawfulness	purposiveness	final purpose
4. <i>Transcendental</i>	truth	beauty	goodness

Fig. 2 — Table of Kant’s cognitive faculties, adapted from the *Critique of Judgement* (Ak. 198). Indicates the cognitive powers and their relation to (1) categories of mental experience, (2) specific objects of knowledge, (3) the a priori principles required to generate knowledge of such objects, and (4) the Medieval transcendentals.

Importantly for our interest in music and theology, Kant’s a priori principles allow him to remove a direct reliance on God from philosophy while still maintaining unity in what is essentially an idealist system.⁵⁵ To make judgements about the world we must view nature *as if* an understanding, i.e. a creative mind, has given it order, but we

⁵³ Ibid., 180–81.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 184.

⁵⁵ Christopher Insole argues that God does continue to provide a basis for the hope that forms an integral part of the ‘complete highest good’, a key element in practical reason (Christopher J. Insole, ‘The Irreducible Importance of Religious Hope in Kant’s Conception of the Highest Good’, *Philosophy* 83 [2008]). Even so, Kant insists that God is not necessary for moral discernment: ‘On its own morality in no way needs religion... but is rather self-sufficient’ (Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, trans. A. W. Wood and G. Di Giovanni [Cambridge University Press, 1998], 6:3–4).

do not need to know whether this is actually the case. Purposiveness is simply a means to an end: viewing nature as if it has been created is a useful fiction (or truth?) that allows us to develop and unify systems of natural laws.⁵⁶ Moreover, because objects conform to our minds rather than the other way around, we can have no philosophical knowledge of the truth or falsehood of things — like the a priori principles, or God — that are beyond our comprehension, nor of objects ‘in themselves’: what Kant refers to as *noumena*. Instead, we can only have knowledge of the external world by applying the concepts of our understanding to our intuitions; i.e., objects appearing as *phenomena*. While an assumption of purposiveness may be necessary for philosophical judgement, this does not give us license to conclude that the world *is in fact* purposive or that it is created by God, despite our tendency to draw such conclusions (something Kant describes as the ‘transcendental illusion’).⁵⁷ As Guyer comments:

Although we can legislate the basic forms of laws of nature, and indeed bring those laws ever closer to the details of nature through increasingly concrete conceptualisations, we can do so only asymptotically and must wait upon nature itself to fill in the last level of detail — which, because of the infinite divisibility and extendability of matter in space and time, nature will never quite do.⁵⁸

The inaccessibility of objects as *noumena* represents a fundamental limitation to philosophical knowledge in a Kantian system. Wolterstorff highlights the importance of ‘boundaries’ in Kant’s thought, a metaphor often found in passages that attempt ‘to establish the limits of reason in regard to its suitable use’.⁵⁹ Knowledge that lies beyond these boundaries — such as that of *noumena* — is *transcendent*: i.e., ‘beyond what can be known, represented or experienced’.⁶⁰ Importantly, one of the areas of knowledge that is beyond the limitations of subjective thought is *metaphysics*, which Kant defines as the attempt to ‘gain knowledge of the unconditioned through pure reason’.⁶¹ The ‘unconditioned’ represents the completion of a series of conditions extended beyond the realm of direct experience. So, for example, we might posit the transcendental freedom of human judgement as an ultimate explanation of human

⁵⁶ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 183–84.

⁵⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A297/B 353.

⁵⁸ Guyer, ‘Introduction’, 2.

⁵⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. P. Carus (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977), 360; quoted in Wolterstorff, ‘Recover From Kant?’, 8.

⁶⁰ Regina Schwartz, ‘Introduction’, in *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond*, ed. R. Schwartz (London: Routledge, 2004), vii.

⁶¹ Beiser, *Hegel*, 54.

moral agency, or, as Descartes, we might use the existence of God to provide knowledge with an objective epistemological foundation. The problem with such explanations, according to Kant, is that because they lie outside the realm of experience we have no basis from which to prefer one metaphysical theory to another:

Once we are beyond the sphere of experience, we are assured of not being refuted by experience. The appeal of expanding our cognitions is so great that nothing but hitting upon a clear contradiction can stop our progress. On the other hand, we can avoid such contradiction by merely being cautious in our inventions — even though they remain nonetheless inventions.... Plato left the world of sense because it sets such narrow limits to our understanding; on the wings of the ideas, he ventured beyond that world and into the empty space of pure understanding. He did not notice that with all his efforts he made no headway. He failed to make headway because he had no resting point against which — as a foothold, as it were — he might brace himself and apply his forces in order to set the understanding in motion. But [Plato is no exception]: it is human reason's usual fate, in speculation, to finish its edifice as soon as possible, and not to inquire until afterwards whether a good foundation has in fact been laid for it.⁶²

Metaphysics signifies those inductive propositions that are consistent with, but not uniquely demonstrable from, experience of the nature of cognition. We must, for example, assume the purposiveness of nature if we are to have confidence in the correspondence between our cognition and the external world. We have no experiential or philosophical basis, however, on which to prefer any particular, possible explanation of purposiveness. We cannot judge, for example, whether purposiveness necessarily implies God, or a set of Platonic ideals, or the statistical teleology of natural selection; explanations that consequently fall into the realm of metaphysics that Kant rejects. I have quoted Kant at some length because this passage clearly demonstrates what is at stake in transcendental idealism for what are identified as the three fundamental questions of metaphysical speculation: 'God, freedom, and immortality'.⁶³ While such issues are of extreme interest — he comments that 'these inquiries [are] far superior in importance... [to] anything that our understanding can learn in the realm of appearances' — we are nevertheless incapable of generating reliable knowledge of the unconditioned through appeals to metaphysics because it, and consequently they, lie outside the constraints imposed by experience.⁶⁴ In addition, because philosophical

⁶² Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A4–5/B8–9.

⁶³ Ibid., A3/B7.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

knowledge is founded on human cognition, such questions, while interesting, have little practical relevance for our knowledge of objects through experience.

Although Kant's epistemology often appears humble in comparison with Medieval Scholasticism, since it restricts our knowledge to things we can comprehend, Guyer submits that appearances of humility are deceptive: 'Transcendental idealism is not a sceptical reminder that we *cannot be sure* that things in themselves *are* also as we represent them to be; it is a harshly dogmatic insistence that *we can be quite sure* that things as they are in themselves *cannot* be as we represent them to be'.⁶⁵ This has important theological implications, as Insole documents. It is not the case that God has perfect knowledge of things in themselves, while we have imperfect access to the objective world through perception, but that we actively construct a world *other* than that which God has created. What initially appears to be ignorance is in fact the condition of our human freedom to think and act independently of God. While 'theologians are apt to worry that... philosophers fail to respect the "ontological difference" between God and creatures... the problem with Kant, for the theologian, is not the gap itself, but what it frames on either side: with the human cognitive mind taking on more and more God-like roles'.⁶⁶

3. Constructing a Kantian Approach

3.1. The Problem of Theological Knowledge

This reassignment of God's epistemological roles to the human subject is not the only theological problem raised by transcendental idealism. If knowledge is limited, as Kant suggests, to objects and experiences that can be determined by our minds, how is it possible to know an infinite, transcendent being like God? Kant's 'Copernican revolution' seems to preclude the possibility that God can be the object of theological discourse. One solution would be to identify theological knowledge with elements of our experience: for example, the practices, experiences, and beliefs of a particular religious community. But although God may be present in these things, he is not, in a traditional theistic understanding, identical with them. Gordon Kaufman illustrates this in his statement of the Kantian challenge to theological discourse, which is worth quoting at length:

⁶⁵ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, 333, quoted in Insole, 'Kant's Transcendental Idealism, Freedom and the Divine Mind', 31. For a contrary view, see Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁶⁶ Insole, 'Kant's Transcendental Idealism, Freedom and the Divine Mind', 29.

‘God’ raises special problems of meaning because it is a noun which by definition refers to a reality transcendent of, and thus not located within, experience. A new convert may wish to refer the ‘warm feeling’ in his heart to God, but God is hardly to be identified with this emotion; the biblicist may regard the Bible as God’s Word; the moralist may believe God speaks through men’s consciences; the churchman may believe God is present among his people — but each of these would agree that God himself transcends the locus referred to. As the Creator or Source of all that is, God is not to be identified with any particular finite reality... But if absolutely nothing within our experience can be directly identified as that to which the term ‘God’ properly refers, what meaning does or can the word have?⁶⁷

Kaufman’s solution, that we should study our ideas about God rather than God himself, has been roundly dismissed because it leads to a radical fragmentation of the discipline, with each theologian in effect positing his or her own theological object.⁶⁸ George Lindbeck suggests that we can avoid such fragmentation, while also maintaining a connection between our ideas about God and the transcendent God himself, by viewing theological discourse within the normative context of a particular faith tradition. In Christianity, for example, theology proceeds under the belief that God has revealed himself to us within experience — through scripture and, in particular, the person of Jesus — thus providing an experiential basis from which to develop theological knowledge that is nevertheless related, as a statement of faith, to an otherwise unknowable God. Religion, Lindbeck argues, functions ‘as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought’.⁶⁹ Language and ideas from within one religious tradition cannot be directly translated into those of another because they are inextricably bound to the life and culture of a particular faith community. As a consequence, we can only know God from within such a perspective of faith. John Macquarrie likewise emphasises the importance of a faith context for theological study, and defines *theology* as ‘the study which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available’.⁷⁰

The problem of theological knowledge within a Kantian epistemology has received considerable attention. Rudolf Otto argues for an additional ‘religious’ faculty of cognition alongside the three identified by Kant, while Joseph Maréchal and the Tran-

⁶⁷ Gordon D. Kaufman, *God the Problem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 7; quoted in Wolterstorff, ‘Recover From Kant?’, 14.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁹ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), 33.

⁷⁰ John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 1.

scendental Thomists reject, with Hegel and Schopenhauer, Kant's distinction between intuitions and things-in-themselves as a means for us to know the creator through his creation.⁷¹ The problem with these approaches is that they all require alterations to basic Kantian principles, whether the nature and number of our mental faculties, or the representational nature of conceptual knowledge, for theological knowledge to be accommodated. By combining Kaufman's thesis — that theologians study ideas about God — with the normative faith contexts identified by Lindbeck, we can retain Kant's epistemological limitations on divine knowledge while nevertheless maintaining the unity of theological discourse. The advantage of this Kaufman-Lindbeck approach is that it provides a means of discussing ideas, such as theological knowledge, that would otherwise belong to the realm of the unconditioned, and thus classified as unjustifiable metaphysical speculation, without altering any of Kant's basic epistemological premises. An assumed faith perspective provides a normative context in which our ideas about God can be legitimately investigated: in Kant's terms, a 'foothold' for metaphysical discussion. This does not, strictly speaking, elevate such ideas to the level of actual knowledge — since we cannot, on the basis of subjective induction, demonstrate the necessity of such a context — but it does provide a theory to explain the coherence of theological discourse, and a means of understanding its content within a Kantian epistemology. Such a solution is perhaps less theologically satisfying than the sacramental understandings of divine knowledge proposed by Wolterstorff and the Transcendental Thomists, but for the purposes of our discussion it is not important to determine whether any particular theory of theological discourse within a subjective epistemology is correct, so long as we agree that either a contextual approach, or some other solution, is plausible. We will thus assume that theological 'knowledge' — i.e., a contextualised theological discourse — is possible within the confines of Kant's epistemology, and that theological conclusions, when considered without assuming a faith perspective, are included under the Kantian definition of metaphysics.

3.2. Establishing the Relevance of Metaphysics

Given these assumptions, we must still grapple with the second challenge posed by a Kantian system to theological knowledge: demonstrating that theological discourse is relevant for musicological research. In transcendental idealism, knowledge is con-

⁷¹Joseph Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique* (Brussels: L'Édition Universelle, 1949), 573; Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. J. W. Harbey (Oxford University Press, 1958), 7. Nicholas Wolterstorff proposes a similar idea, without acknowledging its philosophical antecedents, in 'Is It Possible and Desirable for Theologians to Recover From Kant?'.

structed through the conformity of objects to the structures of our cognition; it is, in basic terms, what we make of our intuitions. Hence the dual problem of God-talk: we can neither have intuitions of God sufficient to establish the traditional characteristics of divinity — e.g., infinity, transcendence, etc. — nor can we understand such ideas within the limitations of our finite human cognition. With music, however, no such difficulties exist: we are capable of intuiting experiences of music, and knowledge of its characteristics is well within the capabilities of our cognition. In knowing a musical work, for example, we categorise our sensory intuitions of the piece in a way that is consistent with our cognition, and in relation to concepts such as pitch, form, meaning, perfection, etc. We are able to generate knowledge of music without reference to metaphysical claims, and thus without the need to assume a particular metaphysical or theological perspective.

This, if true, would seem to rule out the possibility of understanding music's theological significance epistemologically within a system, such as Kant's, where knowledge is constructed by the human mind. As I argued earlier, the advantage of using transcendental idealism as a lens through which to evaluate the relationship between music and theology is that it presents us with an extreme case: determining 'the general principles that are necessary if we are to have any empirical knowledge at all'.⁷² If knowledge is constructed by our human minds, yet we can still learn from empirical observation, then, logically, what must be the case? By questioning the absolute dependence of knowledge on the individual human mind — as both Transcendental Thomists and postmodernists do — we can mitigate Kant's epistemological opposition to metaphysics, understanding metaphysical knowledge as either accessible through and engagement with *noumena* (as Wolterstorff suggests), or the property of social contexts. A far more convincing case for the relevance of theological knowledge to our perception of music, however, can be made if we are able to show, within Kant's own philosophical system, that such a connection exists; that even in a situation where knowledge is fundamentally dependent on the individual human mind, music is inherently theological.

What I propose is precisely this: that a re-evaluation of Kant's aesthetics shows our understanding of beauty to be fundamentally constituted by a metaphysical principle, and thus dependent on the assumption of a metaphysical, e.g. theological, perspective. Although this argument will be expounded more closely in the following

⁷² Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's Critiques*, 329.

chapter, a summary will be helpful here. According to Kant, judgements of beauty are non-conceptual — that is, not made according to determinate propositions⁷³ — and yet also universally valid. The non-conceptual, subjective universality of beauty requires the existence of a ‘subjective principle’ or ‘common sense’ that allows personal judgements to have universal significance.⁷⁴ This *sensus communis* is defined as the ‘idea of a sense *shared* [by all of us], i.e., a power to judge that in reflecting takes account (a priori), in our thought, of everyone else’s way of presenting [something], in order *as it were* to compare our own judgement with human reason’.⁷⁵ We must assume that others think and perceive the world in similar ways, although this cannot be proven, if we are to communicate our ideas and feelings to them. The universality of our aesthetic judgements in particular depends on the existence of this shared sense; we can only insist on the subjective necessity of aesthetic judgements if they are ‘*universally communicable* without mediation by a concept’.⁷⁶

Yet we cannot be certain that our particular aesthetic judgements are in fact ‘universally communicable’: that they rest on the common structure of our cognition. Taste can be cultivated, which means that aesthetic judgements can be incorrect, or at least lack universality. Those with *bad* taste who nevertheless believe their aesthetic judgements to be subjectively necessary are, in fact, mistaken. The *sensus communis* functions as a boundary to our cognition, but unlike the impossibility of knowing things in themselves, it is one that plays an active role in determining our thought. Because subjective judgements of beauty are constituted by a metaphysical common sense, their consistency and universality requires the assumption of a particular metaphysical perspective. While such a context need not be theological, it *may be*, in which case the importance of the *sensus communis* for our aesthetic judgements provides a means of understanding how theological discourse can be relevant to musicology even within a subjective, Kantian epistemology.

One of the key features of the Kantian framework I have outlined is its metaphysical neutrality. Through the *sensus communis*, musical beauty is acknowledged as dependent on a metaphysical standard, the nature of which by definition lies beyond the purview of philosophy in a Kantian epistemology. As a consequence, there is no compelling philosophical reason why one metaphysical perspective ought to be preferred

⁷³ See n. 39 above.

⁷⁴ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 238.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 293.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 295.

over another. Although we will consider the *sensus communis* from a Christian perspective, it would be possible to apply the same Kantian framework to music-theology considered in relation to another religion. This is because although Kant identifies the functional role of common sense in aesthetic judgements, he does not identify the precise nature of this metaphysical standard, or any specific effects of its influence. If, as I will argue, a Christian perspective allows us to interpret this standard as an aspect of God's divine being, then within a Christian context such theological meaning can be applied through the *sensus communis* within a Kantian framework to produce Christian aesthetic judgements of music.

Aesthetics thus functions as what Berger calls a 'signal of transcendence'.⁷⁷ To illustrate how such signals operate, Berger identifies areas of experience that betray such tacit belief: our sense of order, both in society and in the natural world; the suspension of time that occurs during play; our unfailing hope for the future; the need for God to underwrite justice through damnation; and humour, reflecting the human spirit's imprisonment in the world.⁷⁸ In each case, the fact that our understanding of the world includes implicit theological assumptions does not demonstrate the truth of those assumptions, but instead identifies areas within experience that are inherently theological. What is particularly useful about Berger's terminology is its epistemological precision. We cannot conclude, from the anthropological fact that we speak of justice in a way that implicitly relies on the possibility of damnation, for example, that such divine justice exists; only that it must exist if our attitudes towards justice are themselves to be justified.⁷⁹ Our experience is not used to develop a cosmological argument, but to illuminate the implicit metaphysical assumptions that shape our understanding of the world.

Signals of transcendence take on theological meaning when viewed from within a perspective of faith, but they are also elements of experience and thus available to subjective investigation. If Kantian philosophy does implicitly rely on metaphysical — e.g. theological — ideas, we should be able to demonstrate this from within transcendental idealism itself, although we cannot, from that basis, determine whether such dependence is justified. At this point, however, we can use theology to give any signals we find objective definition.

⁷⁷ Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, 53.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 53–72.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 65.

Kantian aesthetics \longleftrightarrow *signals of transcendence* \longleftrightarrow *theology*

Thus, Kant's subjective orientation remains unaltered, yet subjective knowledge is shown to be fundamentally related to ideas that transcend our individual consciousness, making room for ideas, like theological knowledge, that transcend human comprehension. Kantian aesthetics provides a model for understanding how our aesthetic engagement with music functions as a signal of transcendence, implying the dependence of musical beauty on a metaphysical principle. More than this, I will argue that Kant explicitly recognises this dependence by identifying a common sense that performs a constitutive role in the development of our aesthetic judgements. Consequently, Kantian aesthetics presents a particularly useful means of exploring the relationship between music and metaphysical knowledge within an epistemological context that is consistent with what Williams, Begbie, Guyer and Wolterstorff all identify as the fundamentally subjective orientation of modern thought.

3.3. Engaging with Musicological Discourse

This conclusion — that metaphysical commitments play an important role in our aesthetic judgements — parallels recent trends in musicological research, particularly the rise of criticism as a component of 'New Musicology', that analyse the influence of assumptions that cannot be philosophically demonstrated on empirical musicological research. Rose Rosengard Subotnik, for example, faults the view that musicology can proceed without the need for metaphysical contextualisation as 'grounded on a dogmatic Enlightenment ideal of general laws and absolute verifiability, and overlaid with a accretion of equally dogmatic, though narrower and supposedly value-free or non-ideological, positivistic reverence for the so-called "hard" certainty of empirical fact'.⁸⁰ Instead, she argues for the renewal of music criticism, a discipline that may lack some of the empirical rigour of historical research, but nevertheless allows us to consider music intellectually in what is 'an essentially aesthetic undertaking'.⁸¹ Feminist, Marxist, and hermeneutical forms of criticism provide interpretive lenses through which we can identify the philosophical assumptions implicit in empirical studies, and in turn make us aware of the potential for methodological and philosophical pluralism within musicological research. This emphasis on criticism has not been welcomed by all musicologists. Psychological musicologist David Huron, for example, argues in his 1999

⁸⁰ Rose Rosengard Subotnik, 'Musicology and Criticism', in *Musicology in the 1980s*, ed. D. K. Holoman and C. V. Palisca (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), 151.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Ernest Bloch lectures that ‘methodological tools (such as Ockham's razor) should not be mistaken for philosophical world-views’, denying the importance of philosophical context while simultaneously alluding to the role of Ockham's nominalism in the development of the empiricism on which his research depends!⁸²

The appreciation of context and subjectivity within musicology has, however, posed certain challenges, which Kevin Korsyn describes as competing pressures towards fragmentation and unity. While increased specialisation has led to factionalism, both along traditional lines — e.g., between music historians, theorists, and ethnomusicologists — and contemporary distinctions between old- and new-musicology, the professionalisation of musicology has also had an homogenising effect. As a result, ‘Musical discourse faces a double crises... in which the potential for communication... is menaced by fragmentation on the one hand and a false consensus on the other’.⁸³ The root cause of this tension, according to Korsyn, is postmodernism's scepticism of metanarratives. Until the 1960s, musicology as a discipline was united by the belief that ‘there is an essential human nature that is revealed historically in works of art; by assimilating this common culture, one realises one's identity as a member of the human community’.⁸⁴ This metaphysical idea, that the study of music reveals the nature of humanity, gave musicologists in different subdisciplines a shared purpose apart from the empty bureaucracy of professionalism. In a postmodern context, however, such ‘universal claims have lost their persuasive force’, leaving musicology directionless. As Korsyn puts it, ‘How can “we” have a research community when there is no “we”, when the master narrative authorising that “we” no longer commands belief?’⁸⁵ By exposing unifying metanarratives as ideas belonging to what Kant would term metaphysics — concepts that cannot be induced directly and reliably from experience — criticism has led to the fragmentation of musicology as an academic discipline.

Robert Morgan agrees with Korsyn's diagnosis of this problem, although he questions whether Korsyn's proposal — that musical research undergo ‘an ethical transformation that will make us... “More capable of accepting and nurturing otherness” both in

⁸² David Brian Huron, ‘The New Empiricism: Systematic Musicology in a Postmodern Age’, *Ernest Bloch Lectures* (1999).

⁸³ Kevin Korsyn, *Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Musical Research* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

ourselves and in others' — will in fact provide musicology with substantive unity.⁸⁶ Morgan traces the crisis of musicological identity back to the linguistic turn in philosophy, which questioned language's ability to 'embody fixed and absolute meanings'.⁸⁷ Rather than providing access to the objective world, language is instead inextricably dependent on subjective context; we cannot distinguish objective truths from language's subjective elements. Morgan argues that, 'Transferred to music analysis, this eliminates the possibility of an objective account of music. Like all discourse, musical analysis cannot escape language's open-ended universe of plural meanings'.⁸⁸ As a result, 'Unity no longer resides in the composition but is subjectively posited solely by the analyst, with no more value than any other judgement'.⁸⁹ Likewise, Richard Parncutt identifies subjectivity as the defining feature of theoretical musicology's method, which is 'primarily subjective (introspective, intuitive, intersubjective) and philosophical (based on analysis of musical texts, behaviour and experience)'.⁹⁰

Criticism makes us aware of the ways in which the subjective generation of knowledge is influenced by context, including implicit philosophical commitments. As Korsyn and Morgan both suggest, however, it does not necessarily provide a basis from which to understand, in positive terms, how knowledge ought to be constructed. Instead, criticism on its own can lead to the type of disciplinary fragmentation that Korsyn identifies in musicology. The question of how to unify subjective judgements is precisely the issue that motivates Kant to postulate a common sense on which the universal validity of aesthetic judgements could be established. What I will suggest is that an investigation of this common sense, and how it can be related to our understanding of musical beauty, provides a useful lens through which to consider the relevance of metaphysics to musicological discourse more broadly. In other words, Kant's use of metaphysics in aesthetic judgement, which takes place within an epistemological context even more astringently sceptical of metaphysical claims than postmodern criticism, can help us to discern the role of metaphysical knowledge in musicological study, and thus to identify how theological knowledge might be relevant within musicological discourse.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 176. For Korsyn's response to Morgan, see Kevin Korsyn, 'The Death of Musical Analysis? The Concept of Unity Revisited', *Music Analysis* 23:2-3 (2004).

⁸⁷ Robert P. Morgan, 'The Concept of Unity and Musical Analysis', *Music Analysis* 22:1-2 (2003), 22.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 23. For a sympathetic overview of current trends in musicology, see Williams, *Constructing Musicology*.

⁹⁰ Richard Parncutt, 'Systematic Musicology and the History and Future of Western Musical Scholarship', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Music Studies* 1:1 (2007), 5.

Kant identifies the points within a human-mind-dependent epistemology at which metaphysical claims are *necessary* for understanding music in a way that preserves the unity of aesthetic judgements and, in turn, musicological discourse. As I argued earlier, transcendental idealism thus provides a useful, critical tool for evaluating the relationship between understandings of music and metaphysical knowledge, including theological content. Of course it is possible to dismiss all claims to unity as unjustifiable assertions of power, in which case Kant's aesthetics can be used to help identify hidden metaphysical assumptions. In this study, however, we will use Kant's discussion of aesthetic judgement to explore the nature of musical beauty and its implicit dependence on metaphysical knowledge within a subjective epistemology. We will then, by assuming a Christian theological context, be able to investigate the nature of this metaphysical knowledge and its relationship to the divine, thus arriving at an understanding of music's theological significance that is nevertheless consistent with the subjective epistemological orientation common to both modern and post-modern thought.

4. Summary

4.1. Introduction

A brief summary of what has been established in this chapter will help make sense of the subsequent structure of our investigation. For many, music seems to have particular theological significance: what Begbie describes as a sense of being 'theologically loaded'. We resolved to explore the possibility that our perception of music is related to knowledge of God on an epistemological level. While Augustine provides a precedent for such an approach, his argument is unconvincing because it relies on epistemological premises contrary to those that largely shape contemporary thought. For Augustine, knowledge is objective, in the sense that it ultimately exists independently of our minds, and must be discovered in the divine mind through a process of illumination. In contrast, knowledge is now commonly thought to be, at least in part, constructed by the thinking subject. Without judging the merits of either approach, if we wish to develop an understanding of music's theological significance that will be broadly relevant, we must do so within the context of a subjective epistemology.

Kant's transcendental idealism, I argued, provides a useful lens through which to consider music's relationship to theological knowledge. Beginning from twin assumptions — that knowledge is human-mind-dependent, and yet also responsive to em-

pirical observation — Kant attempts to induce the minimal conditions required by these claims, structuring his critiques according to the Medieval transcendentals of truth, beauty, and goodness.⁹¹ Kant's subjective epistemological orientation challenges theological knowledge by both questioning the possibility of theological discourse, and marginalising its role in our understanding of objects, such as music, within experience. To this first issue, I suggested that a contextual approach to investigating metaphysical claims fulfils the need for a normative standard against which to evaluate such statements, as well as providing the beliefs necessary to equate ideas of God with God himself. To the second, I argued that our aesthetic judgements are implicitly dependent on a metaphysical principle — what Kant calls the *sensus communis* — that provides a basis for their non-conceptuality and universality, a claim that will be considered more extensively in the following chapter.

Because Kant identifies, in Allison's terms, the 'formal conditions of experience' as understood from a subjective perspective, his analysis of aesthetic judgement, which includes this metaphysical common sense, can be used to identify the points within our engagement with musical beauty where metaphysical knowledge is necessary to preserve the unity and universality of our judgements while maintaining the human-mind-dependence of knowledge. I will not argue that our aesthetic judgements are, in fact, universal, but will instead suggest that they do, in practice, seem to be distinguished from expressions of opinion by an intention of universality. Aesthetic judgements thus function as signals of transcendence: interpretations that are only possible given particular metaphysical assumptions. The role of unifying metanarratives is a subject of ongoing debate within musicological discourse, and Kant's discussion of metaphysics and aesthetic judgement within a subjective epistemology can, I have argued, provide a useful tool for identifying the features and implications of such universal claims. It can also help to establish the features of musical beauty, considered within a modern epistemology, that must be accounted for in any theological treatment of music's relation to knowledge of God.

4.2. Thesis Overview

As I acknowledged at the beginning of this introduction, the appropriateness of a Kantian approach ultimately rests on its usefulness in understanding music's theologi-

⁹¹ The first of these is derived from Kant's conviction that human freedom requires the independence of cognition from external authority, while the latter reflects the influence of scientific innovations — particularly Newtonian physics — on his thought (see pp. 13–14 above).

cal significance, which must be demonstrated over the course of this thesis. To begin, we must examine the nature of Kant's aesthetics to determine the role of metaphysical knowledge in our aesthetic judgements. After situating aesthetic judgement in relation to the rest of transcendental idealism, we will discuss the characteristics of beauty, the role of genius, and the function of aesthetic judgement in cognition; focusing, in turn, on the constitutive role played by the metaphysical *sensus communis* in our determinations of beauty. If we accept Kant's description of aesthetic judgement as both subjective and universal, this common sense remains necessary even in the face of poststructuralist and postmodern critiques, and is particularly important in our perception of the sublime; which, unlike beauty, does not reflect any characteristics identifiable in our intuitions of objects.

Having established the nature of aesthetic judgement in a Kantian system, we will then consider how such an understanding of beauty is reflected in our experience of music. This discussion will be split into two parts. In the first, after examining Kant's attitudes towards the fine arts, and music in particular, we will consider the musical object in relation to theories of musical meaning to determine whether music is, like other arts, representative of natural beauty; or, as Kant suggests, beautiful independently of nature. The focus will be specifically on linguistic theories of meaning, as these are among the most developed, and provide a means of evaluating claims that music is, in some way, representational. I will argue that music is neither a 'language of the emotions', nor itself a representation of language, but rather that both music and language structure sound in similar, 'grammatical' ways. The key difference between the two, however, is that while language structures sound to communicate semantic content, one of the key features of musical form is the use of structure to subvert expectations of meaning, an idea that will be explored in relation to both theories of generative musical grammar and information theory.

This will lead, in the third chapter, to a consideration of how musical beauty is perceived. Here, Kant's aesthetic theory will be discussed in relation to modern psychology's ecological theory of perception, which suggests that perception is an interactive process between our expectations and the interpretations afforded by objects. Beauty thus represents the perception that an object affords an interpretation consistent with the nature of our cognition, what Kant terms 'purposiveness'. The sublime, however, poses a greater challenge: here, rather than identifying an object's intelligibility, we instead assert that, despite its apparent resistance to interpretation, the object could be made intelligible within a larger interpretive framework. Music, in addition to being

an intelligible human creation, also shows evidence of the sublime, particularly in the negative affect that accompanies unexpected musical forms. This, I argue, can be explained by thinking about music as creating a narrative world. Within this musical world, instances of thwarted expectations are perceived as sublime, whereas from without we know that the music will be, ultimately, intelligible. Music is thus able to appear both intelligible, yet also continues to resist the imposition of specific interpretations; a feature, according to Kant, that distinguishes the free beauty of nature from the accessory beauty of most fine arts.

Music's status as both free beauty and, internally, an example of the sublime, highlights its dependence on Kant's *sensus communis*. The fourth chapter discusses the relationship between aesthetic judgement and theories of religious experience in general terms, and also specifically in relation to music's appearance of theological significance. Friedrich Schleiermacher is the first to suggest that religious experience is related to our non-conceptual, universal judgements of beauty, and this association between a Kantian understanding of beauty and theories of religion continues in the thought of William James and Rudolf Otto. Psychological studies of mystical experience also confirm the non-conceptual, universal, and transcendent nature of religious experiences. I suggest that the correlation between Kantian aesthetics and theories of religious experience makes particular sense in light of the argument that the *sensus communis* is a metaphysical principle that nevertheless functions constitutively in our judgements of beauty. Music, as both an example of free beauty and a human creation, is particularly capable of highlighting the relationship between aesthetic judgements and metaphysics, thus accounting, from an experiential perspective, for the sense that it is theologically loaded.

What is left to determine, then, is whether, from a theological perspective, music actually *is* theologically significant, or if our experience of music as theological is ultimately unfounded. At this point, we must more explicitly assume a particular theological context; in this case, that provided by Christian faith. While various theological approaches to Kant's epistemological claims have been proposed, I argue that Bernard Lonergan's analysis of transcendental idealism provides the most suitable framework for developing a theological understanding of the *sensus communis*. Lonergan suggests that knowledge of theoretical reason depends on an investigation of the structure of reason itself, something that, by definition, lies outside the bounds of knowledge within a Kantian epistemology. Similarly, I argue that Kant's common sense is derived from a metaphysical understanding of human *being*, which can be

understood theologically as grounded in God's ultimate being and existence. Judgements of beauty, in which objects appear intelligible yet resist attempts to fully comprehend this intelligibility, reflect the relationship of God with creation, which is ordered according to God's inscrutable purposes. Music both recreates this sense of wonder at God's providence and participates in it. Our creation and understanding of music are thus intimately dependent on an orientation towards God.

Before drawing such theological conclusions about the relationship between music and knowledge of God, however, we must first consider Kant's description of aesthetic judgement and its application to musical beauty. Kantian aesthetics provides a lens through which we can identify the elements of musical beauty that, from a subjective epistemological perspective, require metaphysical explanation. By identifying how musical beauty functions in transcendental idealism we can develop an understanding of music's theological significance that is consistent with, and relevant to, both modern and postmodern thought, insofar as knowledge of musical beauty is both human-mind-dependent and intended to have universal significance. This is not to argue that objective theories of music's relationship to theological knowledge are necessarily wrong, only that by working from a subjective perspective — using transcendental idealism as a critical tool — we can develop a theory of music's theological significance that is relevant to those for whom the human mind plays a decisive role in the construction of knowledge. It is thus to a consideration of Kant and his aesthetic theory that we now turn.

1

Aesthetics in Transcendental Idealism

1. Introduction

1.1. Summary of Previous Conclusions

In the introduction, I suggested that Immanuel Kant's aesthetics provides a useful tool with which to consider our perception of music and its relationship to knowledge of God from a subjective epistemological perspective. The idea that knowledge is constructed by our minds rather than discerned from an independent source — which is common to both modern and postmodern thought — raises two critical challenges against any attempt connect musical beauty to knowledge of God; obstacles that are particularly prominent in Kant's philosophy. In the first place, because knowledge is constructed by our minds we can only know what can be directly induced from our experiences. Knowledge of God cannot be achieved through induction, and is thus *metaphysical*: beyond the limitations of subjective knowledge.¹ I argued that Gordon Kaufman's theory that theology is the study of *ideas* about God can be combined with George Lindbeck's emphasis on the importance of contextualising faith communities to produce a way of thinking about theological discourse that is consistent with a Kantian epistemology. Regardless, for the purposes of this study we must assume that a workable — if not wholly satisfying — solution consistent with a subjective epistemological perspective is possible.

A more pressing obstacle to understanding music's theological significance epistemologically is the irrelevance, for human-mind-dependent knowledge, of meta-

¹ For Kant's use of 'metaphysics', see pp. 16–18 above.

physical, and thus of theological, knowledge. Because all knowledge can be known through either induction or experience, ideas that fall outside this subjective purview are irrelevant to those within. Consequently, theological knowledge should have no bearing on our understanding of music, which can be experienced directly. What I suggested, however, is that Kant's insistence on the universality of our aesthetic judgements leads him to posit a common sense or *sensus communis* to which our individual aesthetic determinations are responsible. This common sense lies outside of our individual human minds yet plays a *constitutive* role in our perception of beauty: actively shaping our aesthetic judgements, as well as guaranteeing their possibility. Thus, even within Kant's dogmatically subjective epistemology — in which individuals construct knowledge independently so as to preserve their transcendental freedom² — judgements of beauty are shown to be shaped by a metaphysical common sense. If Kant is correct that we intend our judgements of beauty to be universal, then his account of aesthetics indicates the necessity of metaphysical, e.g. theological, knowledge for judgements of beauty, even in an otherwise thoroughly individual-human-mind-dependent epistemology.

1.2. Chapter Outline

The goals of this chapter are thus two-fold. In the first instance, we must determine whether this analysis of the *sensus communis* in Kant's aesthetic theory is correct, while also precisely defining its function in relation to aesthetic judgement. We must also, however, judge whether Kant's description of such judgements is accurate; in particular, whether we do intend our aesthetic judgements to have universal validity. As I suggested previously, it will not be necessary to demonstrate that our aesthetic judgements *are in fact* universal, only to suggest that they are perceived as such, and thus function within Kant's aesthetics as signals of transcendence: interpretations of experience implicitly dependent on metaphysical beliefs. It will also be important to develop a basic knowledge of Kant's aesthetic philosophy, so that this can be applied in subsequent chapters to the nature of musical beauty and its epistemological characteristics; focusing specifically on the relationship between musical understanding and theological knowledge.

We will thus begin by discussing the role of judgement within transcendental idealism, and the relationship between aesthetic and other judgements. We can then

² For a discussion of the relationship between transcendental freedom and Kant's epistemological claims, see Christopher J. Insole, 'Kant's Transcendental Idealism, Freedom and the Divine Mind' (2008).

identify the specific characteristics of beauty, as understood by Kant, and the role of aesthetic judgements within his broader epistemological system. Having established the nature and importance of aesthetic judgements, we can then consider Kant's introduction of a common sense to explain their universal validity. I will argue that this *sensus communis* represents a constitutive metaphysical principle, and thus suggests the inherent importance of metaphysical knowledge for our perception of beauty; a claim that will then be considered in relation to possible poststructuralist and postmodern critiques. Finally, we will apply this understanding of a common sense to a particular class of aesthetic judgements: those related to the sublime. Although both judgements of beauty and sublimity are dependent on the *sensus communis*, the latter are particularly so, and it is this fact that I will suggest, in subsequent chapters, can be understood to account for music's sense of theological significance.

2. Aesthetic Judgement in Kant's Critical Philosophy

2.1. Relation of Aesthetic Judgements to Other Forms

Before turning to a specific analysis of musical beauty, however, we must understand how aesthetic judgement functions in transcendental idealism. The fullest expression of Kant's aesthetic theory appears in the *Critique of Judgement*, first published in 1790. There has been considerable debate over the relevance of this third *Critique* to Kant's broader critical project. Because it is largely devoted to aesthetics, it was until recently 'assumed by the majority of Anglo-American philosophers to be a lesser work, a dated romantic treatise on art that was easily separable from the first two critiques'.³ This is no longer the dominant view, and in the past few decades there have been a number of studies on how judgement, and aesthetic judgement in particular, relates to the epistemological issues raised elsewhere in Kant's works.⁴ There nevertheless does seem to be a development in Kant's thought, or at least a shift in focus, from the *Critique of Pure Reason* and its emphasis on the rational construction of knowledge from our intuitions of the world, to the prominence of sensibility and imagination in the third *Critique*.⁵ We do not need to determine whether these differences do in fact indicate changes in Kant's overall thought, or simply reflect the progressive elucidation of a

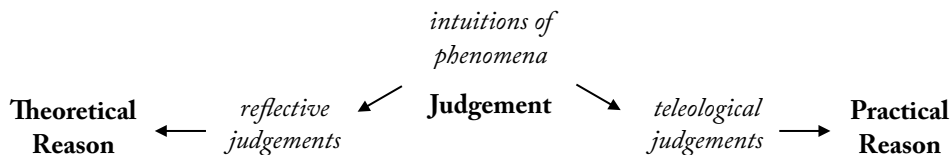
³ Rebecca Kukla, 'Placing the Aesthetic in Kant's Critical Epistemology', in *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant's Critical Philosophy*, ed. R. Kukla (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

⁴ Ibid., 3; e.g. Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1997); Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵ This is summarised in Kukla, 'Placing the Aesthetic in Kant's Critical Epistemology', 9-16.

single, constant philosophical idea, since in either case by the time he wrote the *Critique of Judgement* Kant clearly felt that a more comprehensive treatment of judgement and aesthetics was necessary.

This is evident from the way in which the *Critique* itself discusses its relationship with the rest of Kant's philosophical system. The introduction identifies the basis for Kant's tripartite division of philosophy into discussions of pure reason, practical reason, and judgement, asserting that 'all of the soul's powers or capacities can be reduced to three that cannot be derived further from a common basis: the cognitive power, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, and the power of desire'.⁶ Kant divides our mental powers into three 'faculties', organised around the transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty. *Theoretical* or *pure reason*, which relates to truth, organises our conceptual knowledge of the world under Aristotle's categories. *Practical reason* concerns our moral action, governing our desires and promoting that which is good. *Judgement* processes our immediate intuitions and relates them to the other two faculties: through 'reflective judgement', for example, intuitions are used to generate new concepts in theoretical reason, while 'teleological judgement' identifies an object's purpose, which influences our moral actions as determined by practical reason. We can thus begin to model the basic structure of Kant's cognitive faculties in relationship to these different form of judgements:



This diagram immediately raises two questions: can judgement function as a bridge between theoretical and practical reason, and is there such a thing as 'pure' judgement, without a view to either theoretical or practical ends? The first question is raised by Kant in the introduction the third *Critique*, where he expresses his hope that an analysis of judgement 'will bring about a transition from the pure cognitive power... to the domain of the concept of freedom'.⁷ Such a bridge is necessary because the faculties of pure and practical reason are founded on different a priori principles, which means that 'both of these powers... have a legislation of their own in terms of content which is not subject to any other (a priori) legislation'.⁸ Contemplation and

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 177.

⁷ Ibid., 178–9.

⁸ Ibid., 176–7.

moral action represent two distinct and incommensurable modes of engagement with the world, but judgement is a crucial component of both, leaving Kant hopeful that judgement can unite these two faculties and complete his philosophical system.

Judgement plays an integral role in the expansion and application of our theoretical reason, which categorises particulars, such as our intuitions of sensory information, under universal concepts.⁹ Kant distinguishes between two different types of judgements relating to theoretical reason: determinative and reflective. *Determinative* judgements begin with a rule or principle that already exists in our theoretical reason and then apply it to a particular situation. *Reflective* judgements, on the other hand, seek to place a specific intuition under a universal concept. While determinative judgements are philosophically straightforward since they originate within theoretical reason, reflective judgements pose more of a problem. Unlike determinative reasoning, reflective judgement requires the assumption that nature contains a higher principle, a 'necessary fiction, which assumes that nature does function in a purposive way'.¹⁰ By *purposive*, what Kant means is that we must assume that nature is intelligible, i.e., that it operates in a way that our cognition can understand and model. Purposiveness can be read as a response to Hume's scepticism of causation; by assuming that 'nature is commensurate with our cognitive capacities', we are able to make reliable inductive connections between distinct features of the world.¹¹ While this type of purposiveness is undoubtedly important, for Kant the term also has teleological overtones. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he argues that 'if we are to act morally, the universe itself must be designed for the achievement of moral ends; it must have indeed a final purpose, which is nothing less than the highest good, the kingdom of God itself'.¹² The purposiveness we must assume in nature is not simply causation, but an overarching teleological orientation towards the ultimate goal of the highest good.¹³

In addition to functioning as the a priori principle that establishes the possibility of judgement, purposiveness can also be observed empirically in the structure of ob-

⁹ 'Universal' in this sense refers to general concepts that categorise individual objects, and not to claims of universal validity as discussed below. For Kant's technical use of 'concept', see pp. 11–12 above.

¹⁰ Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester University Press, 1990), 24.

¹¹ Paul Guyer, 'Remarks on Henry Allison's 'Kant's Theory of Taste'', in *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant's Critical Philosophy*, ed. R. Kukla (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 115.

¹² Frederick C. Beiser, 'Moral Faith and the Highest Good', in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, ed. P. Guyer (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 598.

¹³ As I will discuss below, aesthetic judgement is unique because it involves the presentation of *formal* purposiveness and not any specific teleological or conceptual purpose, although both may be construed as evincing this formal purposiveness.

jects. Thus, although the appearance of purposiveness does not automatically imply the existence of a purpose, purposiveness is nevertheless a property of the object as well as a subjective judgement. Speciation, for example, appears purposive, both in formal terms — the fact that species are adapted to their environments is an example of order — and teleologically: the suitability of adaptations suggests a mechanism whereby such order is created. We can choose to ignore this teleological aspect without fundamentally altering the fact that the fact of speciation is, objectively, purposive.

This distinction between the empirical observation of purposiveness and its teleological interpretation reflects the fact that Kant's discussion of teleological purpose occurs in the domain of practical, not pure, reason. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states that the 'final aim to which the speculation of reason... is ultimately directed concerns three objects: the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God'.¹⁴ Although theoretical reason is oriented towards these ends, they fall outside its epistemological scope, which deals with knowledge gleaned through our experience of the world. Thus, Kant writes, 'For speculative reasons these three propositions always remain transcendent and have no immanent use whatever, i.e. no use admissible for objects of experience'.¹⁵ Theoretical reason requires purposiveness, but is at the same time incapable of conceptualising the implied underlying purpose; it can raise these questions, and identify the objective features of purposiveness in objects, but cannot answer them. Moreover, it cannot through them arrive at the ultimate purpose of metaphysical reflection: 'what is to be done'. This teleological question is instead the concern of practical reason, which 'gives laws that are imperatives, i.e., objective *laws of freedom*. Such laws tell us *what ought to occur* even though perhaps it never does occur — and therein they differ from *laws of nature*, which deal only with *what occurs*'.¹⁶

This distinction between pure and practical reason is important because it preserves the contingency of reflective judgements, ensuring that the mind remains free to order the world. Freedom is a central but complicated feature of Kant's philosophy: it is not the ability to act without constraint, but to make genuinely independent judgements. As such, it is closely related to the self-reliance of our cognition, which ensures that our minds are not subject to external judgements.¹⁷ Reflective judgements generate univer-

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), A798/B826

¹⁵ Ibid., A799/B827.

¹⁶ Ibid., A800/B828, A802/B830.

¹⁷ Christopher Insole has argued that Kant's epistemology fundamentally reflects a concern to preserve this type of human freedom from the determining character of the the divine mind (Insole, 'Kant's Transcendental Idealism, Freedom and the Divine Mind').

sals in situations where particulars cannot be categorised according to pre-existing concepts. If these new concepts were provided by an outside source, our minds would be conforming to the objects, rather than objects to our minds. Similarly, if we had actual conceptual knowledge of nature's purpose all of our judgements would be determinative and thus pre-determined. It is crucial that we be able to judge the purposiveness of the world without a conceptual understanding of any specific purpose.

Unlike either reflective or determinative judgements, a judgement of formal purposiveness would fall outside the domain of theoretical reason, since it neither depends upon nor creates a concept. At the same time, through practical reason we *are* capable of making specific teleological judgements, but these must likewise remain distinct from the judgements of purposiveness required for reflective judgement. Thus Kant distinguishes between judgements of formal purposiveness, which are required by our theoretical reason but independent of it, and judgements of objective purpose, made possible by practical reason; the latter he terms teleological, while the former are aesthetic. In answer to the second question raised by the diagram above, Kant argues that aesthetic judgements, because they are neither theoretical nor practical, constitute judgement's pure form.

In a critique of judgement the part that deals with aesthetic judgement belongs to it essentially. For this power alone contains a principle that judgement lays completely a priori at the basis of its reflection on nature: the principle of a formal purposiveness of nature, in terms of its particular (empirical) laws, for our cognitive power, without which principle the understanding [theoretical reason] could not find its way about in nature.¹⁸

<i>Cognitive Power</i>	Understanding		Judgement	Reason
<i>Judgement</i>	Determinative	Reflective	Aesthetic	Teleological
<i>Function</i>	applies existing concepts to intuitions	generates concepts from intuitions	perceives purposiveness/intelligibility	determines purpose behind purposiveness
<i>Purposiveness is</i>	—	required	discerned	explained

Fig. 2 — Table of judgements, organised according to their respective cognitive powers.

Aesthetic judgements of purposiveness are experienced as feelings of pleasure and displeasure, with pleasure indicating purposiveness and displeasure reflecting a lack of formal purposiveness. In other words, we are pleased by things that seem to be oriented towards a goal and displeased by those that appear arbitrary. Because aesthetics

¹⁸ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 193.

is integral for understanding and acting within nature, Kant sees natural beauty as the primary locus of aesthetic judgement. 'Although our concept of a subjective purposiveness... is only a principle of judgement... we are still attributing to nature, on the analogy of a purpose, a concern, as it were, for our cognitive power. Hence we may regard *natural beauty* as the *exhibition* of the concept of formal (merely subjective) purposiveness'.¹⁹ This apparent purposiveness in turn directs us towards consideration of the highest good: 'Since we do not find this purpose [of nature] anywhere outside us, we naturally look for it in ourselves, namely, in what constitutes the ultimate purpose of our existence: our moral vocation'.²⁰ The independence of aesthetic judgement from determination by nature preserves our ability to judge the world, and also leads us towards questions of moral significance.

2.2. Characteristics of Beauty

Kant suggests that the correspondence between the beautiful and the good allows beauty to serve as a sensible representation of morality's formal concepts, so that 'the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good'.²¹ Even so, Kant insists that aesthetic judgements themselves are not based on any concept of the beautiful; judgements of taste can be related to theoretical systems of perfection, but such systems cannot wholly account for our aesthetic reactions: 'These are not rules of taste, but merely rules for the unification of taste with reason, i.e., of the beautiful with the good'.²² Perfection and beauty are not identical; the former is an ethical category, while the latter is based purely on feeling and cannot be conceptualised. Thus, 'There can be no objective rule of taste that would determine what is beautiful through concepts. For every judgement from this source is aesthetic, i.e., its determining ground is the feeling of the subject and not a concept of an object'.²³

This distinction between beauty and perfection is particularly apparent in Kant's discussion of the four 'moments' or characteristics of beauty. He observes that when we like something because it is either agreeable or good, our judgement is at least in part motivated by personal interest. A preference for pasta over stir-fry is not intended to be objective, but simply reflects a personal desire for something

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 301.

²¹ Ibid., 353.

²² Ibid., 230.

²³ Ibid., 231.

pleasurable.²⁴ Similarly, although our judgements of goodness are meant to have objective validity, if we judge an action to be good we create a personal interest insofar as we are subsequently bound to repeat that action in similar circumstances.²⁵ Judgements of the beautiful, however, are disinterested and consequently universal, for if someone judges a painting to be beautiful without any personal motivation, then 'he cannot discover, underlying this liking, any private conditions, on which only he might be dependent, so that he must regard it as based on what he can presuppose in everyone else as well'.²⁶ In other words, because we cannot identify personal reasons for our aesthetic judgements, we must suppose that anyone making a similar disinterested judgement of purposiveness would reach the same conclusion. Although judgements of beauty are subjective, then, they nevertheless have universal validity.²⁷

These first two moments establish the independence of aesthetic judgement from moral reasoning. Because our determinations of the beautiful are disinterested they are not subject to any moral restraints. At the same time, however, this does not give us license to base our aesthetic judgements on personal taste since they would then cease to be disinterested. When aesthetic judgements are properly disinterested they will necessarily be oriented outwards towards humanity as a whole, but from a lack of personal interest rather than in response to a moral obligation. Aesthetic judgement thus easily collapses into selfish interest or moral duty. Even so, pure, aesthetic judgement is inherently amoral. As a consequence, issues of morality can be removed from judgement altogether, not only simplifying philosophical discussions of judgement, but further strengthening Kant's claim that aesthetic judgement represents judgement in its pure, independent state.

Similarly, Kant argues for the independence of aesthetic judgement from theoretical reason. In the third moment of the beautiful, he defines beauty as an aspect of an object's form that evinces purposiveness: beauty is 'the form of the purposiveness of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it without representation of an end'.²⁸ Just as we must distinguish between aesthetic and conceptual judgements of beauty, if we judge an artwork against its fulfilment of a specific purpose our judgement is not free, but bound by the concept of that purpose. When we say that a piece of music is effective,

²⁴ Ibid., 205–207.

²⁵ Ibid., 207–209.

²⁶ Ibid., 211.

²⁷ Ibid., 215.

²⁸ Ibid., 236.

we are not making an aesthetic judgement, but a teleological and thus conceptual one.²⁹ An artwork may have a discernible purpose, but this knowledge cannot explicitly factor into our aesthetic reaction. This may seem counterintuitive given the fact that aesthetic judgements do depend on an appearance of purposiveness or intelligibility. This distinction, however, reflects the fact that aesthetic judgement is a recognition of an object's *formal purposiveness*. Whereas teleological judgements relate purposiveness to a specific purpose in practical reason, and reflective judgements relate purposiveness to conceptual understanding, aesthetic judgements represent the *prima facie* recognition of an object's intelligibility, without any attempt to understand this intelligibility in either moral or conceptual terms:

<i>Purposiveness</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Judgement</i>
Formal	Prima facie recognition of intelligibility, without further definition; independent of both theoretical and practical reason; 'pure' judgement	Aesthetic
Teleological	Explains purposiveness in a moral sense	Teleological
Intellectual	Explains purposiveness in an intellectual or conceptual sense	Reflective

Fig. 3 — Types of purposiveness, along with the forms of judgement to which they relate.

For Kant, it is this consideration of purposiveness in purely formal, as opposed to moral or conceptual terms, that gives aesthetic pleasure its unique, ineffable nature; what he describes as 'the consciousness of the merely formal purposiveness in the play of the cognitive powers of the subject... maintaining the state of the representation of the mind and the occupation of the cognitive powers without a further aim'.³⁰ Aesthetic judgement involves only the identification of formal purposiveness, allowing us to take pleasure in the process of cognition — what Kant describes as cognitive play — without being distracted by specific teleological or conceptual meanings.

2.3. Art and Genius

This emphasis on formal purposiveness not only gives natural beauty primacy over human artistry — since human art has beauty as its obvious purpose — but also leads to the paradoxical requirement that we create art to appear purposive, yet without an identifiable purpose: 'In [dealing with] a product of fine art we must become conscious that it is art rather than nature, and yet the purposiveness in its form must

²⁹ In this case, the concept belongs to practical rather than theoretical reason.

³⁰ Ibid., 222.

seem as free from all constraint of chosen rules as if it were a product of nature'.³¹ While aesthetic judgements — which concern only formal purposiveness — are open to an infinite variety of specific interpretations, once one is selected we have left the aesthetic and entered the realm of teleology. To draw an analogy with physics, aesthetic judgements are like a state of quantum entanglement, in which all possibilities are present but none is actualised. It is this state of infinite possibility — created by *purposiveness without a purpose* — that constitutes the 'play of our cognitive powers', and which must be preserved in our perception of human artistry, despite the artist's conscious attempt to create something beautiful.

It is important, then, that fine art appear purposive but without a clear purpose; otherwise we would not be able to 'like the art in merely judging it'.³² Human art, as Kant notes, will always be created for a definite purpose, and indeed, it helps our appreciation of it to recognise that we are intended to consider it aesthetically. At the same time, however, although art may aim for aesthetic pleasure, e.g. by following certain artistic rules, it must 'not do so *painstakingly*'. In other words, the academic form must not show; there must be no hint that the rule was hovering before the artist's eyes and putting fetters on his mental powers'.³³ Kant moves from this conclusion into a discussion of genius, which he defines as 'the innate mental predisposition *through which* nature gives the rule to art'.³⁴ Genius solves the problem of how artists can produce objects that appear purposive but do not inhibit aesthetic reflection by taking artistic creation out of the hands, so to speak, of the artist. In consciously applying any sort of purpose to an artwork the artist limits our ability to appreciate it aesthetically; genius instead allows the artist to 'channel' the purposiveness of nature without applying his or her own definite purpose.

Kant enumerates the characteristics of genius in greater detail. Genius is a talent, not a skill that can be learned, and 'hence the foremost property of genius must be originality'. To distinguish works of genius from nonsense, which may also be original, they 'must be exemplary; hence, though they do not themselves arise through imitation, still they must serve others for this, i.e. as a standard or rule by which to judge'. Turning from the works of genius to their production, Kant emphasises the ineffability of artistic creation, asserting that 'genius itself cannot describe or indicate scientific

³¹ Ibid., 306.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 307.

³⁴ Ibid., 307.

cally how it brings about its products, and it is rather as *nature* that it gives the rule. That is why, if an author owes a product to his genius, he himself does not know how he came by the ideas for it'.³⁵ There is something about a Mozart opera that naturally invites us to judge it aesthetically, but we cannot know conceptually what this is; otherwise, it would no longer seem natural. 'Nature, through genius, prescribes the rule not to science but to art'.³⁶

We can only discern the rules governing the beautiful by abstracting them from works of genius, for 'the models of fine art are the only means of transmitting these [artistic] ideas to posterity'.³⁷ Even then, however, such works cannot simply be copied, because then they would not be original. Instead, works of genius should be *imitated*, so that they can inspire works of genius in others. 'The artist's ideas', Kant maintains, will only 'arouse similar ideas in his apprentice if nature has provided the latter with a similar proportion in his mental powers'.³⁸ Through genius, art is an imitation of the purposiveness of nature, but we cannot have a conceptual understanding of how this is the case, at least insofar as an artwork's naturalness allows for aesthetic interpretation.

2.4. Aesthetic Unification of Philosophy

At the same time, however, representational arts are also mimetic in a much more straightforward way, depicting or presenting natural beauty for aesthetic appreciation. As a result, while 'a natural beauty is a *beautiful thing*; artistic beauty is a *beautiful presentation* of a thing'.³⁹ A painting with an ugly subject can be beautiful because of the purposiveness of its presentation. Representational art, however, must also be judged against the concept it purports to present, in which case 'the judgement is no longer purely aesthetic, no longer a mere judgement of taste'.⁴⁰ Instead, our judgements of representational art are simultaneously aesthetic (according to the presentation of purposiveness), moral (related to perfection of purpose), and conceptual (determining the content represented), thus providing a unified engagement with all three of our cognitive faculties. By bridging the gap between theoretical and practical reason, judgement promotes both moral and intellectual growth, which is in itself a moral

³⁵ Ibid., 307–8.

³⁶ Ibid., 308.

³⁷ Ibid., 310.

³⁸ Ibid., 309.

³⁹ Ibid., 311.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

good. The conceptual content of representational art feeds our theoretical reason, while its aesthetic component allows us to exercise our cognitive freedom.

If we recall Kant's intentions for the third *Critique* — that it unite theoretical and practical reason — we can see how it is through the aesthetic perception of created objects that this unification practically occurs. Representational arts have both content and purpose, allowing judgements of comprehension (theoretical reason) and perfection (practical reason). Yet although on one level representational artworks can be judged according to a definite purpose — e.g., a landscape painting's depiction of a particular natural scene — on another level they defy such easy explanations. The idea of depiction or representation seems insufficient to give a comprehensive understanding of what a painting is, and it is this surplus of purpose that leads to an aesthetic awareness of purposiveness. Thus, while natural beauty may have priority with respect to pure judgements of purposiveness, representational art unifies our disparate cognitive faculties in the perception of single object. For this reason, Kant argues that 'among all the arts poetry holds the highest rank': more than any other art, poetry combines specific conceptual content, which can be judged by theoretical and practical reason, with a desire 'to engage in mere entertaining play with the imagination'.⁴¹

The possibility that aesthetics might harmonise our cognitive faculties places it at the centre of Kant's subjective approach to philosophy. Far from merely a tangential homage to the burgeoning Romantic movement, the emphasis Kant places on aesthetic judgement reflects its significance for his broader philosophical project and helps to explain the subsequent interest of philosophy in aesthetic issues.⁴² The unifying role of aesthetics for transcendental idealism is also important for our attempt to understand music's theological significance in a way consistent with modern epistemological claims that knowledge is human-mind-dependent. Any signals of transcendence we identify here directly impinge on the entirety of transcendental idealism, and, in turn, can be applied to other subjective methodologies consistent with Kant's critical approach. Consequently, if we are able to demonstrate that aesthetics is in some way dependent on metaphysical knowledge, we can then connect theological knowledge with not only aesthetics, but subjectively-oriented philosophical approaches more generally.

⁴¹ Ibid., 327.

⁴² Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 137.

3. *Sensus communis* as Signal of Transcendence

1. Common Sense in Kant

One aspect of Kantian aesthetics that does seem to imply dependence on a transcendent standard is the ‘common sense’ or ‘*sensus communis*’ that allows personal judgements to have universal significance. Aesthetic judgements are non-conceptual because they are based on feelings of pleasure and displeasure rather than on any conceptual standard. In the Aristotelian terms appropriated by Kant, beauty transcends the categories of theoretical reason because it describes the cumulative effect of the categories themselves, rather than any specific feature of an object. Because concepts must be placed under the categories that beauty transcends, beauty cannot be defined according to a conceptual standard. At the same time, however, ‘If [judgements of taste] had no principle at all... then the thought that they have necessity would not occur to us at all. So they must have a subjective principle, which determines only by feeling rather than by concepts, though nonetheless with universal validity, what is liked or disliked’.⁴³ Kant seizes on the idea of a common sense — i.e., a shared sensibility — as something that could provide a standard with universal validity while remaining fundamentally subjective rather than conceptual.

Kant describes the *sensus communis* as the ‘idea of a sense *shared* [by all of us], i.e., a power to judge that in reflecting takes account (a priori), in our thought, of everyone else’s way of presenting [something], in order *as it were* to compare our own judgement with human reason’.⁴⁴ Although aesthetic judgements are made independently of theoretical or practical reason, they are not as unfettered as they first appear. We can only insist on the subjective necessity of aesthetic judgements if they are ‘*universally communicable* without mediation by a concept’.⁴⁵ In other words, we need some sort of standard whereby individual aesthetic judgements can be enforced on others. Kant’s justification for this reflects the influence of empiricism on his philosophical approach: ‘That we do actually presuppose this indeterminate standard of a common sense is proved by the fact that we presume to make judgements of taste’.⁴⁶ While we could simply reject the idea that judgements of beauty are universally valid, Kant sees this as a crucial distinction between judgements of preference and aesthetics. When we say an object is beautiful, we mean something more than when we express a preference for a particular

⁴³ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 238.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 293.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 295.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 239.

kind of food. This difference between the two types of subjective judgement is fundamentally a matter of universality: we think that others *ought* to recognise the object's beauty, while we do not place a similar moral emphasis on our dietary preferences.

I think Kant is correct to observe that aesthetic judgements are intended to have a certain universality, although the fact that we think this way does not mean that they *are* universally valid, nor does it preclude the possibility of expressing aesthetic statements as matters of preference. 'That painting is beautiful *for me*', for example, expresses an aesthetic preference, and is different from simply stating 'that painting *is* beautiful'. Regardless of whether the universality implied in the second statement is justified or even possible, it nevertheless indicates an intention to express a (subjective) universal fact, not an individual opinion. Nick Zangwill argues that the relativism with which we often speak of taste 'is wildly out of step with common practice', and thus an example of people '*merely theorising....* As with moral relativism, one can virtually always catch the professed relativist about judgments of beauty making and acting on non-relative judgments of beauty — for example, in their judgments about music, nature and everyday household objects. Relativists do not practice what they preach'.⁴⁷ Because our goal is to understand music as a signal of transcendence, the observation that people do, in fact, intend judgements of taste to be universal is sufficient to demonstrate the importance of preserving aesthetic universality in accounts of aesthetic judgements. We do not need, in other words, to show that such judgements *are* universal, only to demonstrate that for an aesthetic theory to be plausible in relation to our experience it must give an account of this aesthetic universality. As Zangwill puts it, 'If we are describing our thought as it is, not how some think it ought to be, then it is important that philosophers should be persistent and insist — in the face of this [relativist] *Zeitgeist* — that normativity is a necessary condition of the judgment of taste'.⁴⁸

If we accept that judgements of beauty are both universally valid and subjective, we are left without a basis from which to argue for them. While we are to approach beauty disinterestedly, taking 'account (a priori), in our thought, of everyone else's way of presenting', we cannot formulate moral principles on the basis of empirical observation because 'ought' does not imply 'will'. 'If we are to use this common sense [as a principle with universal validity], we cannot base it on experience; for it seeks to justify us in mak-

⁴⁷ Nick Zangwill, 'Aesthetic Judgement', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/aesthetic-judgment/> (accessed 27 November 2009).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

ing judgements that contain an ought; it does not say that everyone *will* agree with my judgement, but that he *ought* to'.⁴⁹ In other words, standards of taste cannot be derived from experience alone because they would then lack universal validity: peer pressure cannot be the source of a moral claim.

Instead, Kant argues that our aesthetic judgements are communicable because they reflect the basic structures of human cognition. Aesthetic judgements 'must of necessity rest on the same conditions in everyone, because they are subjective conditions for the possibility of cognition as such, and because the proportion between these cognitive powers that is required for taste is also required for the sound and common understanding that we may presuppose in everyone'.⁵⁰ Our *sensus communis* consists in the fact that, as humans, our minds will produce the same subjective reaction when reflecting on the presentation of a beautiful object, leading to a shared sensibility or common sense. Hence, taste can be defined as 'our ability to judge a priori the communicability of the feelings that (without mediation by a concept) are connected with a given presentation'.⁵¹ In other words, taste involves discerning which subjective reactions are mere personal preferences, and which are a direct result of our common human understanding; what Kant defines as 'the very least that we are entitled to expect from anyone who lays claim to the name of human being'.⁵²

Because aesthetic judgements are universally communicable, they do carry an interest for us insofar as we attempt to communicate them to others. This moral dimension does not follow from the nature of aesthetic judgements themselves, since they are independent of ethical considerations, but from what Kant terms an 'empirical interest' arising from the fact of human society.

If we grant that the urge to society is natural to man but that his fitness and propensity for it, i.e., sociability, is a requirement of man as a creature with a vocation for society and hence is a property pertaining to his humanity, then we must also inevitably regard taste as an ability to judge whatever allows us to communicate even our feeling to everyone else, and hence regard taste as a means of furthering something that everyone's natural inclination demands.⁵³

⁴⁹ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 293.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 292–3.

⁵¹ Ibid., 296.

⁵² Ibid., 293.

⁵³ Ibid., 296–7.

The perception of beauty gives us pleasure; the communication of our aesthetic reactions allows us to share this pleasure with others, thus contributing to the universal happiness that is the goal of moral action.

For Kant, a judgement is only aesthetic if it represents a ‘universal voice about a liking unmediated by concepts’.⁵⁴ Because they are made with respect to the ideal of a common human understanding, aesthetic judgements cannot be ‘wrong’ per se: if two people disagree about whether something is beautiful, one or both of them is allowing personal interest to cloud their awareness of this basic humanity, making their judgement an expression of preference rather than aesthetic universality. This poses a practical challenge, for we have no objective basis from which to determine if a judgement is, in fact, aesthetic. Consequently, ‘Whether someone who believes he is making a judgement of taste is in fact judging in conformity with that idea [common sense] may be uncertain’.⁵⁵ Kant is unconcerned by this, because his intention is not to define the nature of beauty but merely to demonstrate its cognitive structure; it is unimportant that we know which objects are actually beautiful.

This, however, leaves the problem of how a subjective determination can be universally valid unsolved. If Kant’s defence is simply that the *sensus communis* represents the a priori structure of our cognition, it might appear possible to define beauty in objective terms by drawing on the nature of our common human understanding (assuming that such a common humanity exists). So, for example, psychological research might be able to determine how our minds make judgements of beauty, and thus give an objective account of Kant’s common sense. But this is the wrong way to think about it; because Kant’s system is subjective, it is the experience of cognition, as considered philosophically, that is fundamentally important, not possible objective explanations. While we may be able to investigate the *sensus communis* using psychological or neurological methods, Kant’s point is that it defies conceptual access; even if we could give reasons for why we deem certain things to be beautiful, we would still not make judgements of beauty according to these concepts.

At this point, Kant introduces a distinction between determinate and indeterminate concepts. Determinate concepts are those we have been discussing: ideas that we can articulate and categorise using theoretical reason. Indeterminate concepts, however, lack the theoretical definition of determinate concepts. Kant argues that judge-

⁵⁴ Ibid., 216.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

ments of taste *are* in fact based on a concept, but that this concept, which represents the ‘supersensible substrate of appearances’, is indeterminate and thus inaccessible to theoretical reflection.⁵⁶ As a result,

A judgement of taste is based on a concept (the concept of a general basis of nature subjective purposiveness for our power of judgement), but this concept does not allow us to cognise and prove anything concerning the object because it is intrinsically indeterminable and inadequate for cognition; and yet this same concept does make the judgement of taste valid for everyone, because (though each person’s judgement is singular and directly accompanies his intuition) the basis that determines the judgement lies, perhaps, in the concept of what may be considered the supersensible substrate of humanity.⁵⁷

The universality of aesthetic judgements reflects the existence of an indeterminate concept of beauty, derived from the ‘supersensible substrate of humanity’, i.e., from a metaphysical determination of ‘humanness’. *Supersensible* reflects the fact that because it represents that which is common to humanity as a whole, it is inaccessible to subjective reason. As such, it belongs to the realm of the ‘unconditioned’: those basic features that constitute and thus cannot be evaluated by cognition.

3.2. Transcendence of Common Sense

Paul Guyer objects to the introduction of metaphysical justification, arguing that ‘the mere fact that aesthetic judgement requires an indeterminate concept does not seem to be a sufficient ground for introducing any notion of a supersensible reality into Kant’s argument’.⁵⁸ That Kant’s aesthetic theory requires the existence of an indeterminate concept beyond the bounds of subjective knowledge does not, in itself, constitute proof that such a concept exists. Guyer reacts almost angrily to Kant’s epistemological inconsistency: ‘We must conclude that in the end Kant overstepped the limits of his own epistemology in an attempt at least to hint at a kind of guarantee for aesthetic judgement that his original deduction could not provide’.⁵⁹ For Guyer, this move into the metaphysical ultimately invalidates Kant’s argument, which as a result fails to provide ‘a guarantee for the universal validity of aesthetic judgement’.⁶⁰ Henry Allison, on the other hand, thinks that such pessimism misses the point. The *sensus communis* provides one possible way of resolving the fact that ‘differences in aesthetic

⁵⁶ Ibid., 340–41.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 340.

⁵⁸ Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 307.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 311.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

response stemming from differences in the attunement of the faculties would seem to undermine any basis for expecting (not to mention demanding) agreement'.⁶¹ Allison believes it is this issue of *possibility* that Kant is addressing: the point of common sense is not to provide us with a certain basis from which to make aesthetic judgements, but simply to demonstrate the possibility that such a foundation could exist. As a consequence, Allison does not mind being unable to 'say that others *ought* to agree with my aesthetic assessment of an object'.⁶²

I think the true significance of Kant's *sensus communis* and its metaphysical connections lies somewhere between these two positions. Guyer is correct to observe that Kant, in attempting to give metaphysical definition to this common sense, oversteps the limitations of subjective knowledge and thus loses his claim to logical necessity. I also agree that without a supersensible, indeterminate concept to underwrite the universality of aesthetic judgements, Kant's argument is woefully incomplete: if universality is a fundamental feature of aesthetic judgements, then any philosophical theory of aesthetics must explain how determinations of beauty are universal (or, alternatively, how it is that we are mistaken about their universality). Otherwise, we simply have a description of aesthetic judgement without theoretical explanation. Thus, we cannot be content with Allison to remain uncertain about the universality of our aesthetic judgements. Kant himself is explicit on this score: we cannot expect that everyone *will* agree with our judgements of beauty, but we can nevertheless require their assent.⁶³ At the same time, however, Allison is correct that, in his turn to metaphysics, Kant is not trying to define the nature of the supersensible substrate of humanity so much as to sketch out the parameters required of any such metaphysical concept by our aesthetic judgement. Such ambiguity is presupposed by the idea of an indeterminate concept, something which we are unable to comprehend, yet can be known through its effects on our cognition. Guyer is right that by crossing into metaphysics Kant leaves behind epistemological certainty; at the same time, however, he overestimates the importance of these metaphysical speculations which, I agree with Allison, are intended to demonstrate the possibility of a supersensible, indeterminate concept rather than argue for any particular characteristics.

The *sensus communis* thus represents the unconditioned: the universal yet inaccessible features of cognition. Crucially, it does not reside in our individual minds alone,

⁶¹ Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 189.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 293.

but is something that spans our monistic subjectivity and allows us to communicate judgements with others. We can think of it in humanistic terms as an archetype of ideal humanity, or anachronistically as a manifestation of Jung's collective unconscious.⁶⁴ For our purposes, however, what is important is that we can also think of this common sense theologically. Indeed, divine illumination in an Augustinian epistemology performs precisely this role: allowing for the evaluation and communication of aesthetic judgements which are, in the first instance, entirely independent and subjective. In *De musica*, for example, Augustine asks whether it seems 'that to have pleasure with one's sense and evaluate with one's reason are one in the same thing?'⁶⁵ His answer echoes Kant's distinction between a universal idea of beauty — for Augustine derived from knowledge of God — and individual aesthetic judgements: 'It is one thing to approve or disapprove of these motions... which occurs in the pleasure of that which is convenient and in the dismay of that which is inappropriate in such motions or reactions, and another thing to evaluate whether it is right or not to enjoy these things, which is done by reasoning'.⁶⁶ Aesthetic judgements are independent, yet only have universal validity insofar as they are in accordance with a transcendent standard.

Similarly, for Kant, judgements are only aesthetic (and therefore universally valid) if they are consonant with a subjective principle, viz. the *sensus communis*. While Kant's common sense does not *require* a theological source, its nature lies outside the purview of a Kantian epistemology because it does not reside solely in the individual subject. As an indeterminate concept, we can know how it is presented to us — as a subjective principle that provides a basis for the universality of aesthetic judgements — but not what it is *in itself*. As we have seen, the inaccessibility of 'things in themselves' is not a problem for Kant because he makes objects subject to our cognition. So, for example, the fact that we do not have noumenal knowledge of a tree is unimportant, since it is actually our minds that supply the concept of 'tree' and thus give definition to our phenomenal perceptions. Kant's common sense transcends the limitations of our cognition, providing another horizon to subjective knowledge. Unlike our other interactions with the noumenal, however, the *sensus communis* is not only

⁶⁴ Interestingly, Jung thought of himself as a Kantian, although it is uncertain whether his idea of a collective unconscious is specifically related to Kant's *sensus communis*. For a discussion of Kantian influence in Jung's psychoanalytic method, see Paul Bishop, 'The Use of Kant in Jung's Early Psychological Works', *Journal of European Studies* 26:2 (1996).

⁶⁵ Augustine *De musica*, 6.9.23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.9.24.

given definition by our minds, but itself exerts an influence on our subjective thought.⁶⁷ Aesthetic judgements are not made according to any principle within cognition, but instead reflect the structure of cognition itself — the unconditioned — which is by definition inaccessible to philosophical definition: cognition cannot define itself. Although the influence of the unconditioned on judgements of beauty is non-conceptual, its importance is in no way diminished by a lack of conceptual content, since the *sensus communis* is what allows us to distinguish between aesthetic judgements, which have universal validity, and personal preferences.

While Augustine employs divine illumination to perform a similar function, a closer theological analogue to Kant's common sense is actually the Scholastic idea of being. Kant breaks from the tradition of universal being by collapsing philosophy into the single, noumenal 'being' of the human mind. Because philosophy is situated entirely within the mind of a single individual, there is no need for a more general philosophical definition of being. More than this, 'being' in a general sense would actually lie outside the limitations of subjective philosophical inquiry. Once again, Kant is aware of this horizon to human knowledge — that we can have no universal understanding of being — but he views it as an irrelevance: if philosophy is undertaken from the perspective of human cognition, what need is there for a universal idea of being? I would suggest, however, that in positing a *sensus communis* that transcends our individual cognition Kant is in fact resurrecting the idea of being, albeit in a disguised form. The 'sound and common understanding that we may presuppose in everyone', which Kant identifies as common sense, refers to the way in which humans, as a class, exist.⁶⁸ This is precisely the kind of information we would expect to be provided by a principle of human *being*, yet Kant does not identify it as such because he expects philosophies of being to give objective, conceptual knowledge. The *sensus communis* is non-conceptual and subjective, yet it functions as the idea of human being would in a Scholastic system.⁶⁹

Again, the dependence of Kant's aesthetics on an idea of human being does not automatically imply reliance on theological knowledge. What it does demonstrate,

⁶⁷ One of the many questions Kant leaves unanswered is how the noumenal and phenomenal are related. Although we must assume that phenomena are influenced by the noumena, this is another example of a problem that is irrelevant within the strict bounds of transcendental idealism. Unlike the *sensus communis*, noumena do not directly impinge on our cognition, and thus can be safely ignored.

⁶⁸ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 292–3.

⁶⁹ Insole discusses the influence of Scholastic metaphysics on Kant's philosophy in Christopher J. Insole, 'The Irreducible Importance of Religious Hope in Kant's Conception of the Highest Good', *Philosophy* 83 (2008).

however, is that Kantian aesthetics functions as a signal of transcendence, pointing towards a standard beyond the limitations of subjective investigation. We cannot know, from within transcendental idealism itself, the precise character of the *sensus communis*; whether it is theologically derived or simply a humanist archetype; whether it is actually dependent on the divine mind, or simply independent of individual human minds. Importantly, however, because philosophical knowledge is, by definition, subjective (i.e., human-mind-dependent), we cannot know, within Kant's system, the exact nature of the *sensus communis* except to say that it is not a feature of our individual human minds, thus allowing for the possibility that it is a form of theological knowledge. The existence of a transcendent common sense provides a point of connection between the subjective method of Kantian philosophy, imputed to disciplines such as musicology, and the objective epistemological orientation of theology. Aesthetic judgement depends on what can be understood as an idea of human being; working within a particular faith tradition, theology can in turn investigate the relationship between this Kantian being and knowledge of God.

3.3. Poststructuralist and Postmodern Critiques

In the introduction, I argued that Kantian aesthetics provides a useful critical tool for evaluating the epistemology of musical beauty from a perspective in which knowledge is constructed by individual human minds. Human cognition plays a similar determining role in poststructuralist and postmodern thought, but with an additional emphasis on the epistemological importance of social and linguistic contexts. It is important, therefore, to consider the idea that the universality of aesthetics judgements requires metaphysical knowledge in relation to these two modifications of Kant's epistemological premises. The central thrust of poststructuralism — which was first developed in post-war France by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, among others — is helpfully summarised by Nicholas Baragwanath:

The Poststructuralist critique of the subject, broadly speaking, argues that language is indissociable from thought and that therefore any notion of the subject, or indeed any notion at all, must be contingent upon the constitution of that language. This constitution, together with its underlying structures and ideological foundations, is socially determined and, moreover, arbitrary, since it is impossible to escape language in seeking to establish some primary, inherent basis for it to be so constituted.⁷⁰

⁷⁰Nicholas Baragwanath, 'Musicology and Critical Theory: The Case of Wagner, Adorno, and Horkheimer', *Music and Letters* 87:1 (2006), 63.

If language and society play constitutive roles in the development of knowledge, it would seem that they could also provide aesthetic judgements with a standard of universal validity, at least within a particular socio-linguistic context, that is independent of our individual human minds. What this account overlooks, however, is the importance of aligning our cognition with the structure of nature, which is, in Kant's philosophical system, the primary purpose of aesthetic judgements. Although language may colour how we perceive purposiveness, or provide a socially-compiled catalogue of intelligibility, aesthetic judgements must ultimately reflect both the basic features of human psychology and structure of the natural world. Even if knowledge is, to some extent, constituted by collective as well as individual human minds, the ordering of nature remains, in Kantian terms, unconditioned: prior to and thus inaccessible from our cognition. Consequently, we must still posit the purposiveness of nature a priori, and thus rely on a metaphysical standard for the universality of our aesthetic judgements, insofar as these reflect a recognition of natural purposiveness.

A different type of challenge is posed by postmodernism. In a remarkably relevant statement, musicologist Carl Dahlhaus identifies the importance of Kant's common sense, but dismisses its relevance in a characteristically postmodern way:

The driving force behind the idea of 'a' music — as a result of 'a' history — was the classical utopia of humanity that formed in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* the basis of an aesthetics in which judgments of taste are 'subjective' but nevertheless 'common' to the extent that subjectivity strives to converge with a '*sensus communis*', with a 'common sense'. If, however, humanity finds expression less in the discovery of a common substance than in the principle of respective untranscendable difference, then one remains true to the idea of 'a' music by relinquishing it as a concept of substance in order to restore it as a regulative principle of mutual understanding.⁷¹

Rather than shaping our aesthetic judgements, Dahlhaus views the idea of a common sense as encompassing the plurality of our ideas about musical beauty, thus functioning in a regulative, rather than constitutive sense. What I have argued, however, is that we do experience aesthetic judgements in a way that distinguishes them from mere expressions of preference. Even if we do not expect or demand the agreement of others, we nevertheless retain a sense that aesthetic judgements carry metaphysical weight: that they apply beyond our individual minds. Dahlhaus's own position that musical judgements should be made under a principle of respective untranscendable

⁷¹ Carl Dahlhaus, 'Was ist Musik?', trans. in Stephen Hinton, 'The Conscience of Musicology: Carl Dahlhaus (1928-89)', *Musical Times* 130:1762 (1989), 738.

difference is itself a metaphysical claim that must actively shape our judgements if it is to be enforced. For this to be the case, our common aesthetic sense cannot simply be regulative, but must actively constitute our judgements.

Dahlhaus expresses postmodernism in positive terms — as concrete awareness of difference. Our own approach, on the other hand, recognises the existence of untranscendable difference, but reserves judgement on the truth status of mutually exclusive metaphysical statements. I have argued that the sense of metaphysical weight attached to judgements of beauty requires a metaphysical explanation — a common sense — that is not simply regulative but constitutive for our judgements, if our understanding of aesthetics is to be consistent with our experience of beauty. Aesthetic judgement functions as a signal of transcendence: an experience that betrays implicit dependence on the metaphysical. The precise content of such metaphysical claims cannot be demonstrated, nor can we know that our sense of metaphysical dependence is accurate. There is an admission, then, of inevitable difference, but it is not endowed ontological significance: we cannot know the answer, but neither can we know that there is not *an* answer. The latter claim, which Dahlhaus makes, is itself a metaphysical conclusion, and thus unjustified on the basis of our experience alone. Instead, the goal of our study is to discover whether music's theological significance can be understood epistemologically *given* two conditions: that knowledge is constructed by the human subject, and that, as Kant argues, we intend aesthetic judgements to be universal.

4. The Sublime

Before we apply these conclusions to musical beauty, one further aspect of Kantian aesthetics deserves our attention. Kant's treatment of the sublime is in many senses tangential to the overall argument of the *Critique of Judgement*, something he acknowledges in characterising it as 'a mere appendix to our aesthetic judging of the purposiveness of nature'.⁷² In evaluating the *Critique*, Allison agrees with Kant's assessment, and argues that the lack of reference to the sublime in other sections of the work indicates that its inclusion was 'a last-minute decision'.⁷³ While it is true that Kant's theory of the sublime does not substantially impinge on his theory of aesthetic judgement, it nevertheless provides an additional perspective from which to consider the implications of the *sensus communis* — a supersensible or transcendent standard on which aesthetic judgements depend.

⁷² Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 246.

⁷³ Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 303.

Modern interest in the sublime can be traced to Nicolas Boileau's 1674 translation of the treatise *On the Sublime* [*Περὶ ὑψους*] by Longinus (either first or third century AD). Unlike other Classical discussions of beauty, which tend to be concerned with conceptual attributes like symmetry and proportion, Longinus's treatise reflects a more experiential perspective on aesthetic reactions. The sublime is not that which pleases in the mere perception, but is instead something that leads to an emotional reaction; it is a 'transport' that 'prevails' over us with 'irresistible might'.⁷⁴ Thus, Longinus describes the sources of sublimity in oration in terms of action and morality rather than intellectual principles: the *power* of forming great concepts, vehement and inspired *passion*, *noble* diction, *dignified* composition.⁷⁵ Likewise, the sublimity of a speech is judged by the actions it induces. Longinus's emphasis on action and emotion echoed the themes of seventeenth-century aesthetics, and thus proved a popular counterpart, upon its translation, to more intellectual theories of beauty.

Following Longinus, the most influential treatment of the sublime was Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, published in 1757. Burke investigates these two experiences according to their psychological character, arguing for a radical distinction between the sublime and the beautiful. While the beautiful is fundamentally pleasing, the principle characteristic of our reactions to the sublime is 'terror', although of an attenuated form, considered intellectually from a position of safety.⁷⁶ It is uncertain to what extent Kant was influenced by Burke's views on the sublime. The *Enquiry* first appeared in German translation in 1773, nine years after Kant's first brief discussion of the sublime (*Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*), but seventeen years before his more rigorously philosophical treatment in the *Critique of Judgement*. In either case, Kant, like Burke, believes that the sublime can be distinguished from the beautiful by its initially negative affect. Even so, Kant does not draw a radical division between these two topics, but instead unites both under aesthetic judgement.

Kant begins his discussion of the sublime by identifying five similarities with beauty. Both the beautiful and the sublime, he argues, are liked 'for their own sake' according to their 'mere exhibition'; our judgements of sublimity are disinterested and based on the object's presentation to us, rather than on any specific content. As a re-

⁷⁴ Longinus *On the Sublime*, 57.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. J. T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 39–40.

sult, they are both subjective and universal. They also refer to indeterminate concepts, producing the sense of formal purposiveness that leads to cognitive play.⁷⁷ In formal terms, then, judgements of beauty and sublimity are virtually identical; both are types of aesthetic judgement. Even so, Kant identifies a number of important differences between the beautiful and the sublime. In the first instance, because beauty relates to form, an object can only be considered beautiful when viewed in its entirety; beautiful objects are thus *bounded*. The sublime, on the other hand, 'Can also be found in a formless object, insofar as we present unboundedness, either [as] in the object or because the object prompts us to present it, while yet we add to this unboundedness the thought of its totality'.⁷⁸ Whereas judgements of beauty can only take place, as it were, after the fact — once the totality of the object has come into view — judgements of the sublime have a prospective and thus unlimited quality whereby our minds project from an incomplete object or experience towards its consummation. The beautiful is complete, and thus requires only our passive acknowledgement of its beauty; the sublime leads to action, as we build on its unboundedness. Kant formalises Longinus's emphasis on action by aligning the sublime with practical reason, with contemplation of the beautiful instead related to our faculty of theoretical reason.

The unboundedness of the sublime affects how we appreciate its aesthetic character. We like the beautiful directly and thus entirely on a cognitive level, taking pleasure in the play of our cognitive powers. Because the sublime is incomplete, in spurring us to action it creates a series of emotional reactions. Like Burke, Kant argues that when confronted by the unboundedness of the sublime our initial reaction is negative, so that our pleasure in the sublime 'arises only indirectly: it is produced by the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital forces followed immediately by an outpouring of them that is all the stronger'.⁷⁹ What is initially daunting and overpowering becomes all the more pleasurable once we begin viewing it in aesthetic terms because our cognitive powers can now 'play' on two levels: both in the discernment of purpose, and the construction of its totality.

This intensification of aesthetic judgement also features in what Kant deems 'the intrinsic and most important distinction between the sublime and the beautiful'.⁸⁰ Because beautiful objects are bounded, their form projects a sense of purposiveness; a

⁷⁷ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 244.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 245.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

beautiful painting has clearly been constructed according to a cognitive idea, as its completed form demonstrates. Likewise, natural beauty appears to have been consciously constructed, and it is this sense of purposiveness that underlies our perception of its beauty. In aesthetic judgements of the beautiful, we recognise objects as being purposive, but without defining any particular purpose. In judgements of the sublime, however, there is an intensification of this process. While beautiful objects appear purposive *prima facie*, the sublime initially appears *contrapurposive*, which produces its negative affect. Contrapurposiveness is not simply a lack of purpose or an appearance of randomness, but *active* resistance to our cognition. It is thus evidence of a higher level of purposiveness, but one that we can only posit rather than experience directly. The sublime is 'contrapurposive for our power of judgement, incommensurate with our power of exhibition, and as it were violent to our imagination, and yet we judge it all the more sublime for that'.⁸¹

On one level, then, in our experiences of the sublime we are ignorant and powerless, aware of purposiveness only in light of our own incomprehension. For this reason Kant believes that only nature can provide such an overwhelming experience. Moreover, because our judgements of the sublime can only identify contrapurposiveness, we cannot actually say that any object is itself sublime, since we might mistakenly attribute contrapurposiveness to that which is simply random. Sublimity thus resides exclusively in our minds; whereas the purposive creation of an object ought to make it beautiful, thus allowing us to speak of beautiful *objects*, with the sublime 'all we are entitled to say is that the object is suitable for exhibiting a sublimity that can be found in the mind'.⁸² Because judgements of the sublime are formed entirely within our minds, the *sensus communis* becomes even more crucial for ensuring their universal validity; we cannot even determine whether the object is in fact purposive, leaving the 'supersensible substrate of humanity' as the only basis for the universality of the sublime.

On another level, however, our positive sense of the sublime is only possible in the context of human freedom. If we were simply overwhelmed by sublime, we would never move past our initial negative reaction. Kant gives the example of a stormy sea: we can only take sublime pleasure in the violently crashing waves from a position of both physical safety and intellectual detachment; we have to be able to view the situation as an opportunity for us to exercise our cognitive powers, rather than simply as a

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

determining assault on our cognition (and person). What is particularly interesting is that the *sensus communis*, rather than itself functioning as a metaphysical constraint on our cognition, actually provides for this intellectual freedom. Thus, in thinking about Kant's common sense as a signal of transcendence we must be aware that it does not give objective definition to the beautiful or the sublime, but instead supplies a metaphysical basis from which we can enjoy the freedom of our cognitive powers in aesthetic judgements, both of the beautiful and the sublime.

5. Summary

In this chapter I have argued that Kant's *sensus communis* functions as a signal of transcendence, implying the dependence of aesthetic judgements on a principle independent of our individual human minds. Although this common sense transcends the limitations of our subjective cognition, its non-conceptuality (i.e., in Kant's inconsistent terminology, the fact that it is an *indeterminate* concept) prevents it from simply controlling our aesthetic judgements. Rather, it functions as the condition of possibility for our freedom to make judgements of both beauty and sublimity, and to enjoy the play of our cognitive powers. Although the *sensus communis* lies outside the purview of subjective knowledge it nevertheless directly impinges on our cognition. The fact that this conclusion directly conflicts with Kant's intention to free our judgements from external determination is a further indication of its importance. In the previous chapter, I suggested that transcendental idealism provides a lens through which we can examine knowledge of musical beauty in a human-mind-dependent epistemology. What we have seen here is that in such a system, the universality of aesthetic judgements is only possible in relation to a constitutive, metaphysical principle. If we intend aesthetic judgements to be universal, then we are implicitly reliant on metaphysical knowledge. Kant's *sensus communis* thus identifies a point within a subjective epistemology where theological knowledge is potentially relevant to our understanding of musical beauty.

Having established the possibility that theological knowledge plays a constitutive role in our subjective aesthetic judgements, we must now apply Kant's aesthetic theory to the question of musical meaning: determining more precisely how our perception of music is dependent on metaphysics and, in turn, how its theological significance can be understood in a way consistent with theories in which knowledge is human-mind-dependent. It is these issues that will occupy our discussion of musical beauty in the following two chapters.

2

Purposiveness of the Musical Object

Directly, in itself, music signifies nothing, unless by convention or association. Music means nothing and yet means everything
— Vladimir Jankélévitch¹

1. Introduction

1.1. Summary of Previous Conclusions

I have argued that Immanuel Kant's aesthetics provides a particularly useful lens through which to analyse musical beauty for theological significance in a way consistent with a modern, subjective epistemology. In Kant, knowledge is not only constructed by our independent human minds, but limited to what can be either experienced empirically or induced from the fact of cognition. His thought thus presents a particularly astringent test for claims that music is somehow dependent on knowledge of God, since such theological knowledge would seem to be both beyond our comprehension and irrelevant to understanding objects, such as music, that can be known through experience. If, however, musical beauty can be shown to require metaphysical knowledge, then we will have demonstrated that even under one of the most stringent of subjective epistemologies it is necessary to view beauty in relationship to claims that extend beyond the competence of the individual human mind, and thus legitimate to think of music as theologically loaded.

In the previous chapter, we analysed Kant's theory of aesthetic judgement to determine whether such a claim could be defended. Judgements of beauty, according to

¹ Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. C. Abbate (Princeton University Press, 2003), 11.

Kant, are both non-conceptual and universal, which raises the issue of how judgements that are not logically necessary or conceptually communicable can nevertheless be universally valid. Kant's solution to this problem is to propose a 'common sense' in which our aesthetic judgements are based, and which I argued represents precisely the type of constitutive metaphysical principle necessary to understand musical beauty as theological within a subjective epistemological system. This common sense is involved in all judgements of the formal purposiveness or intelligibility that characterises beautiful objects, but is particularly important in relation to the sublime, where we perceive purposiveness despite an object's apparent unintelligibility.

In judgements of beauty, however, there is an interaction between the intelligibility of the object, which can be directly perceived, and our interpretation of its purpose. Where an object appears intelligible, and a reason for this intelligibility can be discerned, then it can be understood in relation to conceptual understandings of its purpose and the perfection of its form. So, for example, a watch appears intelligible, and this intelligibility reflects the fact that it was created to keep time. We can subsequently judge the watch against this specific purpose: it is a good watch if it tells time accurately. When we view an object as beautiful, however, we perceive its *formal purposiveness* — the mere fact of its intelligibility — apart from any specific awareness of purpose. Kant argues that such an aesthetic appreciation is difficult when a purpose can be easily discerned; the watch's utility blinds us somewhat to its aesthetic potential, and prevents us from engaging in the cognitive play that results from unsuccessful attempts to discern a specific purpose. Beauty is thus a combination of the object's intelligibility and our subjective interpretation: i.e., whether we can discern a purpose behind the object's purposiveness, and whether we choose to focus on this, or on the mere fact of its intelligibility.

1.2. Chapter Outline

To determine how the dependence of aesthetic judgements on a metaphysical common sense can be related to our thesis that music is 'theologically loaded' epistemologically, we must apply Kant's aesthetic theory to musical beauty. Beauty is both a property of the object — e.g., its intelligibility and resistance to conceptual determination — and a subjective judgement. Consequently, we will need to consider Kantian aesthetics in relation to both the musical 'object', and our perception of musical beauty. The first task will occupy this chapter, while the second aspect will be discussed in chapter three. In referring to the 'musical object', I wish to avoid debates

over what precisely constitutes a musical work, or where the line between objective features and subjective interpretation is drawn. The point of referring to the musical object, as distinct from our perception of music as a phenomenon, is to discuss as far as possible those features that are intrinsic to the music rather than added to it by our cognitive processes of perception. Of course, particularly for a human art, the line between objective possession and subjective interpretation is difficult to discern. Therefore, our focus on the musical object will be more a matter of perspective than a stark philosophical distinction. In this chapter, then, we will address the question of music's aesthetic characteristics through an analysis of musical form, whereas in the following we will turn to our subjective experience of musical phenomena.

Kant discerns a fundamental relationship between judgements of beauty and questions of intelligibility or purposiveness. Beautiful objects must appear purposive, but should also resist attempts to fully explain this intelligibility in conceptual terms. Language, for example, is *prima facie* intelligible, yet it is not normally an object of beauty because its purposiveness is almost entirely reducible to its communicative function: language is intelligible, but this apparent purposiveness lacks aesthetic interest. Music has often been compared with language, and the idea that music is in some way linguistic — either a language of the emotions or a metaphorical representation of feelings and objects — is one of the most developed areas of musical semantics. Yet music, unlike most examples of language, is eminently aesthetic, indicating that its intelligibility is irreducible to conceptual knowledge. Linguistic theories of musical meaning can thus provide a useful means of discerning the source and nature of purposiveness in the musical object.

In this chapter we will consider various linguistic approaches to musical meaning, evaluating the extent to which the musical structure echoes the intelligibility of language and determining the reasons for its aesthetic, as opposed to communicative, function. I will argue that while music and language share many common features, music does not use linguistic structures to communicate specific meanings. Instead, musical analogues to metaphor and other grammatical forms are often employed to thwart the perception of specific, conceptual content. The musical object thus appears intelligible because of its formal structure, but this very structure is destructive of specific meaning in a way that promotes aesthetic consideration rather than conveying conceptual purpose. In this way, the musical object points us towards the limitations of our cognition, as well as making us aware of the dependence of aesthetic judgements on a metaphysical common sense.

2. Musical Beauty in Kant's Aesthetics

Before we analyse musical meaning, however, we must first consider how Kant applies his aesthetic theory to musical beauty. As Jankélévitch's statement at the beginning of this chapter indicates, the challenge for aesthetic analyses of music is to explain how music can be both meaningful — or in Kantian terms, purposive — while nevertheless defying attempts to understand this meaningfulness in any specific way. A basic response to this apparently paradoxical requirement is to simply proclaim that music is both intelligible and inscrutable. In this vein, Andrew Bowie suggests that it is music's 'mathematical form', coupled with capacity for conveying emotion, that allows it to be 'understood... as functioning in terms of a kind of dialectical "identity of opposites"'.² In other words, music's formal structure provides intelligibility, while the non-conceptual nature of its emotional content precludes conceptual understanding. While I agree with Bowie that both form and emotion play key roles in establishing the association between music and Kantian aesthetics, I do not think that a simple 'identity of opposites' is sufficient to explain how music, as a human art, can appear purposive yet without a purpose.³ Instead, to understand how music may appear both purposive and devoid of specific content we must first consider Kant's discussion of human arts, including music, before analysing the nature of musical beauty in light of his aesthetic system.

As we have seen, the difficulty of human artistry for Kant is that while it should be intelligible, its purpose must remain hidden. This is challenging on a number of levels. In the first place, because we can empathise with the thoughts and motivations behind human works of art it is difficult to appreciate their intelligibility without immediately becoming aware of a particular source (e.g., the artist's desire to produce a beautiful object). The mere recognition that art is created to be beautiful can often spoil its aesthetic effect; this is what happens in works of kitsch, where the artist's intention is so patently obvious that we rebel against it. Despite the universal scope of this concern for human art, however, it is not usually problematic in particular instances because although we know that the artist intends to produce something beau-

²Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester University Press, 1990), 226.

³ 'Purpose', as I have discussed, has both teleological as well as logical connotations in Kant's aesthetics, denoting the logical form behind an object's surface appearance as well as the motivations of its creator. In Aristotelian terms, purpose roughly covers the formal and final causes, while purposiveness signifies the mere existence of a formal and/or final cause, without necessarily requiring specific knowledge of their content. For an additional discussion, see p. 36 above.

tiful, this knowledge alone is insufficient to explain the nature of the specific object produced (except, again, in situations like kitsch where the details of the work can also be understood as directly reflecting this general purpose).

Far more challenging to the aesthetic appreciation of human art is its representation of nature. The idea that all art is fundamentally mimetic has a long history in Western thought. Aristotle defends this theory in his *Poetics*, arguing that ‘epic poetry and tragedy, comedy also and dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation’.⁴ In a Platonic system, where objects are themselves imitations of ideal forms, art becomes second-order imitation: a copy of a copy. In a famous passage of *The Republic*, Plato describes the hierarchical relationship between different kinds of creation using the example of bed, which can exist as an eternal Idea, a specific instantiation (a physical bed), and as an image in a painting:

“Beds, then, are of three kinds, and there are three artists who superintend them: God, the maker of the bed, and the painter.... Shall we, then, speak of God as the natural author or maker of the bed?”

“Yes,” he replied; “Inasmuch as by the natural process of creation He is the author of this and of all other things.”

“And what shall we say of the carpenter — is not he also the maker of the bed?” “Yes.” “But would you call the painter a creator and maker?” “Certainly not.” “Yet if he is not the maker, what is he in relation to the bed?”

“I think, he said, that we may fairly designate him as the imitator of that which the others make.”

“Good,” I said; “Then you call him who is third in the descent from nature an imitator?”

“Certainly,” he said. “And the tragic poet is an imitator, and therefore, like all other imitators, he is thrice removed from the king and from the truth.”⁵

For Plato, the artist is not a creator, but someone who simply imitates what others have made. Consequently, artists and poets are, at least to some extent, dishonest, since their works invariably fall short of the real things they attempt to represent: the artist painting a picture of a bed lacks the skill of the carpenter who built it, or the creative power of God who first conceived of the Ideal bed. As Susan Sontag observes, ‘Since [Plato] considered ordinary material things as themselves mimetic objects, imitations of transcendent forms or structures, even the best painting of a bed

⁴ Aristotle *Poetics*, 1.

⁵ Plato *Republic*, 10.597.

would be only an “imitation of an imitation”. For Plato, art is neither useful... nor, in the strict sense, true’.⁶ Sontag argues that viewing art as fundamentally deceptive places an undue emphasis on discerning the conceptual ‘truth’ hidden in artistic imitation, and consequently objects to any attempt to locate propositional meaning in artworks. ‘Whatever it may have been in the past, the idea of content is today mainly a hindrance, a nuisance, a subtle or not so subtle philistinism’.

Sontag’s analysis is instructive because it reveals the extent to which we do view art in representational terms. Even her suggestion that we focus on our individual emotive experiences of art rather than seeking to establish a ‘correct’ propositional interpretation — what she calls developing an ‘erotics of art’ — does not challenge the view that art is mimetic, but simply argues that we ought to ignore its representational aspect.⁷ From a Kantian perspective, this focus on the conceptual content of art is unsurprising, since the play of our cognitive powers involves testing objects’ intelligibility against specific concepts of meaning. Once we have decided on a specific explanation of an object’s purposiveness, we are no longer simply judging it aesthetically, but either in relation to our understanding or practical (moral) reason. The challenge for understanding human artistry, then, is to explain how we can continue to perceive an object’s formal purposiveness despite the conceptual knowledge it communicates (e.g., the character of a landscape or the content of a narrative).

Characteristically, Kant takes what would seem to be a challenge to the aesthetic appreciation of human art and actually uses mimesis to explain how human art can be formally purposive. He first distinguishes between free beauty, which ‘does not presuppose a concept of what the object is meant to be’, and accessory beauty, which ‘does presuppose such a concept, as well as the object’s perfection in terms of that concept’.⁸ With accessory beauty, responsibility to an external concept ultimately tempers aesthetic ambition: ‘Much that would be liked directly in intuition could be added to a building, if only the building were not [meant] to be a church’.⁹ Our aesthetic judgements remain non-conceptual but occur alongside conceptual judgements of perfection made relative to the object’s purpose. ‘Purpose’ as it relates to purposive-

⁶ Susan Sontag, ‘Against Interpretation’, in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966), 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5, 14.

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 229.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 230.

ness indicates a conceptual explanation of an object's form and characteristics, as well as the motivations behind its existence:

Purpose... is something whose *concept* can be regarded as the basis of the possibility of the object itself, presenting objective purposiveness in a thing presupposes the concept of the thing, i.e., *what sort of thing it is [meant] to be*; and the harmony of the thing's manifold with this concept (which provides the rule for connecting this manifold) is the thing's *qualitative perfection*.¹⁰

Knowledge of purpose leads inevitably to judgements of perfection, and this 'connection of beauty with the good (i.e., as to how, in terms of the thing's purpose, the manifold is good for the thing itself) impair[s] the purity of a judgement of taste' because it gives us a personal interest in our aesthetic judgements; an uncomfortable chair, for example, is less likely to be perceived as beautiful. Kant argues that we can continue to be aware of an object's formal purposiveness — and thus its aesthetic dimension — after determining its objective purpose, but that in this case our aesthetic judgements are linked to practical reason and its conceptual teleological judgements. Importantly, accessory beauty cannot, in and of itself, allow for cognitive play, since the purpose of such play is to determine an object's specific purpose, which in the case of accessory beauty is already known (or easily knowable).

Instead, human art is able to facilitate this play of our cognitive powers, typical of pure aesthetic judgements, *through* its representation of nature. Just as nature is intelligible but resists our attempts to fully comprehend its structure and movements, so, too, human art is able to appear aesthetic by representing these qualities derived from nature. Mimesis enables aesthetic reflection, but as with Plato, removes human art to a secondary level dependent on the beauty of nature. The principle of genius is likewise founded on the imitative nature of art, with the artist acting as an unthinking conduit for the beauty of the natural world. By capturing the beauty of nature through representation, art is able to lead us into the aesthetic contemplation of something — viz., natural beauty — that is purposive yet without a discernible purpose, unlike human art itself. Thus, Kant states that 'a natural beauty is a *beautiful thing*; artistic beauty is a *beautiful presentation* of a thing'.¹¹ Whereas in natural beauty it is the object itself that is beautiful, in art it is the *presentation*, rather than the object itself, that inspires aesthetic reflection. Art highlights the purposiveness of nature by

¹⁰ Ibid., 227.

¹¹ Ibid., 311.

inviting the aesthetic consideration of particular elements. For this reason, art is able to make things that are mundane or even ugly when viewed in nature appear beautiful, since it suggests that even that which naturally defies understanding is nevertheless purposive. Even so, human art, as accessory beauty, is not beautiful *per se*, but is beautiful because of the non-conceptual purposiveness of the objects it represents.¹²

Music without words, however, presents a special case, because it does not appear to be representational. Kant is likewise puzzled by the nature of music, and categorises it alongside nature as an example of free, rather than accessory, beauty: ‘What we call fantasias in music (namely, music without a topic [*Thema*]), indeed all music not set to words, may also be included in the same class [free beauties]’.¹³ Yet this designation of music as free beauty raises a number of issues. In particular, it is difficult to understand how music can be irreducibly purposive in the absence of mimesis, since human purposiveness alone cannot remain inscrutable. With representational arts, genius channels natural purposiveness into the artwork through the depiction of nature. But how is music able to be purposive *as nature* without representing the purposiveness *of nature*?

3. Linguistic Theories of Musical Meaning

3.1. Music as Language

One possibility is that music is, in fact, representational, only that its representational character is obscured because it relates to experiences rather than discrete objects. A common approach is to view music as representing emotions: painting, as it were, a landscape of emotional reactions. In this case, it is argued that music is mistakenly perceived as a free beauty and that its aesthetic character is actually accessory, although the objects of its representation are ineffable. While this eliminates many of the difficulties related to the aesthetic character of music, I do not think it is sufficient to explain the fundamental character of musical art. Examining the arguments given by proponents of the most popular types of representational theory — which understand music in linguistic terms — will demonstrate, I think, the inadequacy of this easy, but ultimately insufficient, explanation.

The idea that music is linguistically representational is expressed in its basic form as the belief that music constitutes a ‘language of the emotions’, a phrase coined by

¹² In the case of objects created for human use as well as aesthetic appreciation, the purposiveness we perceive is related to nature’s accommodation of human needs.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 229.

the most outspoken twentieth-century proponent of this view, Deryck Cooke.¹⁴ In *The Language of Music*, Cooke sets out to produce a ‘dictionary’ of musical semantic elements, attempting ‘to establish the terms of [music’s] vocabulary, and to explain how these terms may legitimately be said to express the emotions they appear to’.¹⁵ Cooke examines the various elements of musical expression — pitch, time, mode, interval, etc. — and combines these elements into semantic units. ‘To leap from the dominant up to the tonic’, for example, ‘and thence to the major third, with or without the intervening second, is... expressive of an outgoing emotion of joy’, an assertion supported by examples ranging from Compère to Wagner.¹⁶ The dependence of Cooke’s linguistic model on the Medieval conception of music as synonymous with song is apparent from his choice of examples, the majority of which have texts. Musical content is dependent on linguistic meaning; thus, the association of an ascending melodic motif 5-1-3 with happiness is confirmed by its consistent pairing with texts that also express this emotion. The connection between music and song is further established in Cooke’s evolutionary theory of music and language: ‘The most feasible theory of the origin of language is that it began as inarticulate, purely emotional cries of pleasure and pain; and some of the utterances still survive in the two languages—speech and music—that grew out of them’.¹⁷ Music and language have developed together, and reinforce each other’s semantic content.

Despite its ambition (or perhaps because of it), Cooke’s work leaves much to be desired. While his selection of examples is extensive, they also seem to have been collected to confirm his theories, rather than being used to develop them. He argues, for example, that ‘Western composers, expressing the “rightness” of happiness by means of the major third, expressed the “wrongness” of grief by means of the minor third’, but then gives, among his examples, the first four notes of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony — which actually form a *major* third, not a minor one — and the opening of Mahler’s Fifth Symphony, which, like the Beethoven example, is harmonically ambiguous and could easily be the upper half of a major triad instead of the lower third of a minor sonority.¹⁸ In both of these examples, it is the harmonic context following the melodic motif that actually seems to colour our emotional reactions. That is not to

¹⁴ Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (Oxford University Press, 1959), 32.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57, 59.

say that minor third or minor triad is not often used in contexts with negative emotional content, but it is difficult to see how Cooke's semantic units can rise to the level of words, which generally have a limited number of fixed meanings, and are only marginally affected by context. In contrast, while many of Cooke's 'words' do seem to retain a constant meaning across different examples, this meaning can only be actualised within specific musical locations.

Cooke does not place his discussion of music as a language in the context of linguistic theory, a weakness that contributes to the sense that his examples are selected arbitrarily. Rather than starting from a consideration of the elements that define natural languages, he focuses almost exclusively on identifying a musical vocabulary, fulfilling a necessary but insufficient condition for linguistic status. Göran Hermerén provides a useful list the requisite characteristics of language, arguing that 'a language must possess

- (1) discrete and repeatable elements
- (2) which, when strung together, suggest or evoke ideas or feelings
- (3) because they constitute a vocabulary; it must also possess
- (4) indexical and characterising elements,
- (5) force-showing devices and modalities, as well as
- (6) logical connectives; in being thus,
- (7) it must admit the possibility of metalinguistic assertions about itself.¹⁹

According to Hermerén, then, languages must have vocabularies that refer to specific concepts; means to specify number (e.g. definite and indefinite articles, 'this' and 'that'), mood (e.g. indicative, imperative, etc.), and logical relationship; and the ability to make self-reflective statements. While this catalogue may not be exhaustive, it serves as a convenient point, I think, from which to consider the success of linguistic approaches to musical meaning. Cooke provides inconclusive evidence for the first three conditions, but the real challenge begins with demonstrating the fourth: that there are musical ways of specifying specific instances, analogous to the English words 'this, that, I you, here, there, now, then, past, present, future'.²⁰

This is something that Cooke, who fails to engage with linguistic theory, does not attempt to establish. William Coker, however, believes that music can be shown to possess indexical elements. These, he argues, are 'the salient points within musical gestures... [T]hey mark these points for attention in themselves as well as direct attention

¹⁹ Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 5.

²⁰ Wilson Coker, *Music and Meaning* (New York: The Free Press, 1972), 90.

to other more or less specific places in the gestures'.²¹ The upbeat at the start of a hymn tune, for example, is a musical way of highlighting the subsequent melody; it 'says' '*this* is the musical idea'. Music also possesses logical connectives. Coker's basic theory concerning these is that while language expresses words like 'is' and 'or' discursively, music expresses these ideas in a more immediate way. Thus, 'In presentation of properties music exhibits connections — logical connections between objects — that the word "is" denotes in a less direct way. Musical gestures do overtly what "is" stands for discursively'.²² Thus, according to this system the common repetition of a hymn tune's first phrase implies the musical equivalent of the English 'and'; the first phrase is connected to the second through repetition, forming a single musical (logical) unit.



Ex. 1 — W. A. Mozart, Piano Sonata in A major (K. 331), mm. 1–18.

It is questionable, however, whether Coker's defences are sufficient. As Stephen Davies points out, even if music has logical connectives of a rudimentary sort, the

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 114.

types identified by Coker would be unable to perform many basic logical tasks like defining the scope of a logical statement: there is no way to distinguish between $\sim(A \vee B)$ and $\sim A \vee B$.²³ Moreover, it is unclear what a 'language of emotions' actually *means*. If we think about the kind of 'sentences' that music, according to Cooke and Coker, can form, they bear only a passing resemblance to the sentences of natural languages. Consider the first few bars of Mozart's Piano Sonata in A major (K. 331; ex. 1). The first measure is an example of what Cooke calls the 'lullaby' phrase, moving between the major third and the dominant, while the descending major triads in measure eleven denote 'a sense of experiencing joy passively'.²⁴ If we add in some of Coker's logical connectives, then the theme as a whole might be thought of as communicating 'this is a lullaby, experienced passively'. But what about all of the material that remains unaccounted for? Are measures two through ten meaningless? Or do they simply repeat or intensify the content of the first bar?

If only two out of the first eighteen bars actually have new linguistic meaning, it is difficult to see how fulfilling the functions of a language could be music's primary function. Furthermore, we are still left without many basic features of natural languages, having, for example, no way of distinguishing between declarative statements ('This is a lullaby, evoking passivity') and commands ('Listen to this lullaby passively'). Coker's claims notwithstanding, musical 'sentences' seem incapable of expressing propositional meanings, with 'nouns' limited to emotions and 'verbs' restricted to some sense of 'is' or 'becomes'. Music can hardly be a fully-fledged language without the ability to convey concrete meanings. While Cooke might respond that music is a language of a different order, speaking in emotional rather than propositional terms, or that music is an attenuated language without all of the facilities of a natural language, such responses call into question the usefulness of the linguistic analogy. If music is a language, but of a completely different kind than any other language, is it helpful to think of it in this way? Davies thinks not, arguing that because music fails to meet most of the criteria for being a language it is misleading to think of it in such terms: 'If one were to persist in talking of vocabulary and syntax while attempting to analyse the nature of significance in music, one might easily mislead not only one's readers but also oneself'.²⁵

²³ Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*, 11.

²⁴ Cooke, *The Language of Music*, 167, 130.

²⁵ Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*, 24.

3.2. Metaphorical Representation

Music does not represent nature as a language of the emotions. Yet while it may not be an actual language, music does seem to contain elements with linguistic correlates. Perhaps rather than constituting a fully-fledged language, music simply appropriates linguistic processes — in particular, metaphor — to function as representations of language itself. This possibility is intriguing because it suggests that music's purposiveness is not derived from nature, but from another human creation, viz., language. If music were a representation of language then its beauty would not be free, since we could judge its perfection against the linguistic objects represented. Even so, it would retain its uniqueness as a representation of the human mind rather than natural purposiveness. Moreover, such a theory would offer justification to authors like Julian Johnson, who extol the importance of music on humanist grounds, as well as raising a number of interesting theological issues.²⁶

To evaluate whether music *represents* linguistic elements, we must first define the characteristics of these features within language. I will focus on metaphor, since the term is both common in discussions of musical meaning and more theoretically complex than either metonymy or onomatopoeia. According to Max Black, the recognition that something is a metaphor depends 'on our knowing what it is for something to be a metaphorical statement, and secondly, on our judgement that a metaphorical interpretation is preferable to a literal one'.²⁷ A metaphorical statement need not be literally impossible. In the case of 'The Lord is my shepherd', the 'Lord' could actually *be* a shepherd, but this interpretation is hardly preferable to the metaphorical one in which he acts towards his followers as a shepherd would act towards his sheep. The reason for choosing a metaphorical interpretation may thus be 'the patent falsity or incoherence of the literal reading, but it might equally be the banality of that reading's truth, its pointlessness, or its lack of congruence with the surrounding text'.²⁸

Traditionally, metaphors have been viewed as a phenomenon of mental substitution, 'as when we take "Richard is a lion" to mean "Richard is brave" because lions are reputed to be brave'.²⁹ In this view, metaphors 'are not necessary, just nice'; the literal

²⁶ Julian Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music?* (Oxford University Press, 2002). In particular, how to avoid the temptation to worship ourselves through music.

²⁷ Andrew Ortony, 'Metaphor: A Multidimensional Problem', in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony (Cambridge University Press, 1979), 5.

²⁸ Max Black, 'More About Metaphor', in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony (Cambridge University Press, 1979), 36.

²⁹ Steven C. Krantz, 'Metaphor in Music', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45:4 (1987), 351.

paraphrase contains the same meaning as the metaphor, which functions at a rhetorical rather than semantic level.³⁰ Consequently, a metaphor can never be essential or generative of meaning. In contrast to this position, Black's 'interaction' theory allows the two concepts being juxtaposed in a metaphor to interact with one another: the meanings of both words change to accommodate each other, generating meaning that would not necessarily be possible to communicate literally. If a metaphor is said to have a primary and secondary subject, then the secondary subject is not so much a particular thing as a system of relationships, an 'implicative complex'. The speaker selects features of the primary subject to emphasise by applying the associated relationships of the second subject, projecting these onto the first subject.³¹ Taking 'Marriage is a zero-sum game' as an example, Black suggests the implicative context of a 'zero-sum game' contains the following relationships:

- (G1) A 'game' is a contest;
- (G2) between two opponents;
- (G3) in which one player can win only at the expense of the other.³²

This system is then projected onto the concept of 'marriage', resulting in the following, parallel implicative context:

- (M1) A marriage is a sustained struggle;
- (M2) between two contestants;
- (M3) in which the rewards (power? money? satisfaction?) of one contestant are gained only at the other's expense.³³

In this example, the standard conception of 'marriage' is altered significantly; as Black notes, 'A marriage that can be seen as a competitive "game" of skill and calculation is not the kind made in heaven'.³⁴ This ability for metaphors to actually change the meanings of their subjects, however, is one of the key features of Black's theory; a metaphor produces 'a shift in the speaker's meaning — and the corresponding hearer's meaning — what both of them understand by words, as used on a particular occasion'.³⁵ Moreover, it is not clear that the meaning conveyed by 'Marriage is a zero-sum game' could actually be expressed literally; when analysed as above the statement not only

³⁰ Ortony, 'Metaphor and Thought', 3.

³¹ Black, 'Metaphor and Thought', 28-9.

³² *Ibid.*, 29.

³³ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

loses its rhetorical effectiveness, but also its plausibility. Metaphorical constructions, then, are not simply cases of substitution, where no new information is supplied by the comparison, but actually help to construct and expand our understanding of the world.

For music to function metaphorically, however, musical motifs must first be endowed with sufficient meaning to allow for comparison. This is, of course, one of Cooke's primary reasons for compiling a musical dictionary: that by defining reusable semantic units in music, we can explore how these basic 'words' or ideas can be used in other transformational processes, like metaphor. The problem with this approach, as I have argued, is that music's extremely limited capacity for conceptual representation reduces any linguistic constructions to the point of inanity. If we recall the Mozart Sonata, 'this is a lullaby, experienced passively' is hardly the kind of content that will retain our interest. A similar lack of depth plagues attempts to understand music a metaphorical. The types of metaphorical statements possible in music are indefinite to the point of vacuity: 'happiness is bittersweet', 'death is heroic'. More importantly, in our experience, this type of content is not the primary source of musical import. Granting the existent of musical 'vocabularies', I believe that the desire to place these words within a quasi-linguistic framework suggests that even if music is able to represent emotions directly — as some, including Peter Kivy, have argued — this representation can account for only a small part of music's meaningfulness.³⁶

Instead, I have suggested that music may represent the linguistic *structure* of metaphor rather than providing actual linguistic statement; that it presents us with Black's implicative construct, but without the conceptual content necessary for true metaphorical comparison. Is it possible, however, to represent only the structure of presentation without any conceptual content? Nelson Goodman suggests that while music is primarily concerned with the representation of cognitive structures, the capacity for conceptual representation nevertheless remains essential to the nature of artistic beauty. Because signs, by definition, refer to something, he argues that artistic signs must also have a referent, which is possessed by the art itself. Art 'exemplifies' that which it represents, and as a consequence its symbolism is self-referential. A painting of a tree does not simply represent a tree, but also symbolises the representation of the tree. Art thus refers primarily to itself — to its possession of the representation of the tree — and only secondarily to the tree represented, so that exemplification can be

³⁶ Kivy argues that music depicts the physical characteristics of emotions through sound (Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980]).

understood as 'possession plus reference'.³⁷ Even so, art must still retain this secondary, conceptual referent to provide the content that populates the forms of presentation. 'Consider,' Goodman writes, 'a tailor's booklet of small swatches of cloth. These function as samples, as symbols exemplifying certain properties; it is a sample of colour, weave, texture, and pattern, but not of size, shape, or absolute weight or value.... The swatch exemplifies only those properties that it both has and refers to.'³⁸ The book of swatches could not be an example of something without being an example of *some thing*. It does not matter what the particular examples are: whether we are looking at a tailor's swatches or a travel brochure. Even though the specific content is, in one sense, irrelevant, it must nevertheless exist.

If we think of music as exemplifying linguistic structures, then, it must both possess such structures itself while also providing an actual example metaphor, metonymy, etc. I think a case can be made that music often performs functions reminiscent of Black's interaction theory of metaphor, in which two musical ideas are presented and then transformed through mutual comparison. It could be argued that sonata form itself provides an example of such a metaphorical structure, with the themes of the exposition transformed in light of each other through the development, resulting in the modified statement of the recapitulation. For music to function as an exemplification of linguistic metaphor, however, music's metaphorical structure must also contain an actual linguistic metaphor to which the musical structure refers. In other words, the metaphorical transformation represented by sonata form must be accompanied by conceptual content that is similarly altered through metaphorical comparison. Again, I think that an argument could be made that this often happens, at least on a basic level, in musical compositions. If we take the sonata form example, the first and second themes often have contrasting affects, which are then shown to be related through the development and recapitulation. To take a simplistic example, if the first theme is 'anxious', while the second is 'confident' (as in the first movement of Mozart's 40th Symphony), then the metaphorical conclusion would relate anxiety with confidence.

If music sometimes fulfils the criteria of Goodman's exemplification theory, however, this is not always the case. Once more, I would question whether the conceptual content of such musical metaphors is sufficient to provide a true example of the metaphorical structure represented by the musical form. Is a vague association between anxiety and

³⁷ Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Oxford University Press, 1968), 53.

³⁸ Ibid.

confidence really the equivalent of a linguistic metaphor like ‘marriage is a zero-sum game’? More importantly, it does not seem that music actually needs to possess such metaphorical content to nevertheless function as a metaphor. Instead, the ‘metaphorical’ comparison of the musical forms themselves would seem sufficient: ‘first theme is second theme’. Similarly, Susanne Langer argues that although music is structured in a way that recalls linguistic features like metaphor and logic, these forms are ultimately devoid of specific meaning. ‘Music has all the earmarks of a true symbolism, except one: the existence of an assigned connotation’. As a result, music is ‘a limited idiom, like an artificial language, only even less successful; for music at its highest, though clearly a symbolic form, is an unconsummated symbol’.³⁹ Like Jankélévitch, Langer sees this semantic ambivalence as a benefit, for ‘music is revealing, where words are obscuring, because it can have not only a content, but a transient play of contents’.⁴⁰

3.3. Relationship between Musical and Linguistic Meaning

Langer’s comments take us back to where we began this discussion of linguistic musical representation. Music appears symbolic; in other words, it is intelligible and purposive. Even so, an investigation of this symbolism reveals music to be devoid of conceptual content. Although we may identify specific instances where particular musical forms have become imbued with meaning, these are insufficient to account for music’s more general purposiveness; they do not provide a concept that ‘can be regarded as the basis of the possibility of the object itself’.⁴¹ The idea that music is linguistically representational has a certain intuitive appeal. Linguistic elements do not have intrinsic meaning, but are instead (largely) arbitrary signs. Thus, while in one sense language is representational, in that its signs can be related to specific objects or experiences in nature, in another sense the ‘stuff’ of language itself — phonemes or letters combined into arbitrary words — reflects our cognition rather than the natural world. Likewise, music seems non-representational because we are unable to discern any inherent connection between musical elements and nature. Moreover, on a basic level, both music and language are examples of meaningfully structured sound, an observation that has led to speculation that music and language may have a common evolutionary source.⁴²

³⁹ Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 240.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 243.

⁴¹ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 227.

⁴² See Cooke above, p. 68, and, for a more detailed discussion, Steven J. Mithen, *The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind, and Body* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Yet despite these affinities, music lacks what is perhaps the central, defining feature of language, viz., conceptual content. Whereas a collection of phonemes is not a word if it does not have meaning, musical phrases are under no such obligation to be conceptually meaningful; their purposiveness is not a product of any identifiable concept. I have argued that music does not exemplify language for precisely this reason: its meaningfulness is not contingent on the possession of an example of linguistic meaning to which its representation of metaphorical structures can refer. We might still wish to view music as a representation of language, relying on the structures of linguistic purposiveness to create aesthetic meaningfulness. I agree with Goodman, however, that such an approach makes little sense if music is unable, or not required, to possess actual linguistic meaning. Music cannot be a representation of metaphor if it does not present an actual linguistic metaphor. To say instead that music represents, not actually metaphor, but some sort of metaphor-ness simply adds an additional layer of complexity to our understanding of musical purposiveness, and misleadingly suggests a closer relationship between music and language than can be justified.

In particular, it suggests that music's purposiveness is derived, like that of language, from the communication of conceptual meaning. Languages — even those we do not speak — appear purposive to us because we are accustomed to hearing phonetic sounds convey conceptual meaning. This is *not* an aesthetic awareness of purposiveness, which would focus on the mere formal structure of the sounds and not their conceptual content, but a teleological judgement based on language's communication of concepts. If music represents language, its purposiveness must likewise be rooted in linguistic communication. Music would seem purposive because, in representing linguistic structures, it leads us to expect, as Langer suggests, a communication that never comes. But this is to frame the situation in the wrong direction. Music is not purposive because it apes the purposiveness of language as an attenuated form of linguistic communication, but is instead purposive *precisely because* it lacks linguistic content. Music's purposiveness is not derived from the teleological purpose of language, but from aesthetic formal purposiveness. Consequently, those who would reduce music to a representation of language are confusing relationship with generation. As we have observed, there are many strong affinities between music and language, particularly in their shared use of sonic structures to convey meaningfulness. The question, however, is whether musical purposiveness is derived from the representation of linguistic meaning. Music and language, I would argue, share similar formal structures, but their sources of purposiveness are independent. Whereas language derives its formal purposiveness from the fact of conceptual commu-

nication, the purposiveness we perceive in music is wholly aesthetic, based on the cognitive intelligibility of the *sounds themselves* rather than on their communication of conceptual meaning.⁴³

We can observe this distinction between musical and linguistic purposiveness in poetry, an art form that, as Kant notes, emphasises both conceptual content and aesthetic meaningfulness. Paul Ricoeur comments that in poetry, the literal meaning of the words is often less important aesthetically than all sorts of contextual information normally hidden in the directness of prose:

Poetic language presents a certain 'fusion' between meaning or sense and the senses. This distinguishes it from non-poetic language, where the arbitrary and conventional nature of the sign separates meaning from the sensible as much as possible.... In poetic language, the sign is looked at, not through. In other words, instead of being a medium or route crossed on the way to reality, language itself became 'stuff'.⁴⁴

For poetic language, the particular use and construction of words and sentences is just as important as their actual meaning. In fact, the literal meaning of the words is often intentionally obscured through the use of figurative language and non-standard word order to force readers into a second-order interpretation of the text. This, Ricoeur argues, is how language can be appreciated in its own right: 'In changing the lexical code, the poet "makes sense" with the entire statement containing the metaphorical word'.⁴⁵ Meaning no longer functions on the level of words, but is conveyed by the cumulative effect of the words of an entire phrase. Moreover, this meaning is not concrete or conceptual, but aesthetic. While the poetic use of metaphor, rhythm, repetition, assonance and the like does not convey semantic content, it is these syntactic devices that, to a large extent, distinguish poetry from prose by inviting us to consider the poem aesthetically; i.e., in the mere perceiving.

If poetry uses the acoustic and grammatical properties of language to create an opaque symbol — something looked at, not through — music similarly relies on sonic and structural elements to encourage aesthetic engagement: it is poetry, but without words.⁴⁶ Music uses analogous formal structures to similarly focus our attention on the aesthetic purposiveness of its organised sounds. The fact that we can distinguish in

⁴³ Once again, arguments that music and language have a common evolutionary source chime nicely with my theory that music and language are structurally similar, yet intelligible for different reasons.

⁴⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. R. Czerny (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 209.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴⁶ Or, in the case of song, poetry in which the sonic elements of its aesthetic dimension are given particular emphasis.

poetry between linguistic and aesthetic sources of purposiveness provides evidence for the contention that music and language, though related, have largely distinct sources of intelligibility. Whereas linguistic purposiveness is explained by the ‘purpose’ of linguistic communication — i.e., language’s communicative intent fully accounts for its intelligibility — music’s aesthetic purposiveness remains inexplicable. Moreover, because musical purposiveness cannot be explained as the representation of either linguistic intelligibility or the purposiveness of natural objects, it can be, as Kant argued, an example of free beauty alongside, but not derived from, nature.

4. Models of Musical Intelligibility

This conclusion raises a number of theological questions. In particular, it appears to complicate the relationship between musical beauty, which is a human creation independent of nature, and the divine purpose behind the purposiveness of nature. If music, like representational arts, were dependent on the purposiveness of nature, then musical beauty could likewise be explained by the inscrutable purposiveness of nature, which, in theological terms, reflects the hidden purposes of its creator. As I commented earlier, Kant uses the representational character of art to explain how human creations, which are presumably comprehensible at least to their creators, can nevertheless appear formally purposive. A painting of a tree is beautiful, and not simply communicative, because it presents the formal purposiveness of the object it depicts. Our ability to perceive art as beautiful is thus irreducibly dependent on the incomprehensible purposiveness of nature. If musical beauty is not representational but free, it calls into question the idea that the formal purposiveness of aesthetic judgement can be explained by our ignorance of nature’s purpose. How, then, can the formal purposiveness of a human creation like music be explained in a way that does not rely on the representation of natural beauty?

I have argued that although music does not represent metaphor, its form nevertheless shares an affinity with linguistic structures. Consequently, we can use this linguistic correspondence as a means of analysing both the structural similarities and differences between music and language, thus providing us with a basis from which to consider how music is formally purposive.

4.1. Generative Musical Grammar

The most comprehensive attempt to apply linguistic models of syntax to musical forms is the generative theory of tonal music — first proposed by Fred Lerdahl and

Ray Jackendoff in 1983 — which uses Noam Chomsky's notion of generative grammar to analyse hierarchical elements of musical structure. Chomsky's theory of language argues that the structure of linguistic grammar is not simply arbitrary and learned, but reflects the character of an inherent mental capacity for language. It is this cognitive linguistic faculty that allows children to learn a language's complex grammatical rules, in many cases without even being exposed to them. Much of what appears to be learned is in fact generated by our linguistic faculty; what must be taught are the grammatical exceptions to these innate rules. Similarly, Lerdahl and Jackendoff argue that musical structure reflects an inherent human capacity for a musical 'grammar', many aspects of which 'are simply the only (or easiest) ways that one's mental abilities make available for organising a musical signal'.⁴⁷ Fundamentally, their claim is that 'much of the complexity of musical intuition is not learned, but is given by the inherent organisation of the mind, itself determined by the human genetic inheritance'.⁴⁸ With this theoretical position articulated, Lerdahl and Jackendoff proceed to investigate the extent to which our musical 'knowledge', i.e. our ability to make sense of the music we hear, is 'learned, and to what extent is it due to an innate musical capacity or generative cognitive capacity'.⁴⁹ The way to discover this is by considering which aspects of musical form can be found throughout music across cultures and time periods, and which appear more localised. Through this process, 'The innate aspects will reveal themselves as "universal" principles of musical grammar'.⁵⁰

Like languages, individual musical idioms have both generative and learned components. Thus, Lerdahl and Jackendoff view the 'goal of a theory of music to be a formal description of the musical intuitions of a listener who is experienced in a musical idiom'.⁵¹ Yet there is a sense that music's universal elements are given a privileged position, with idiomatic deviations viewed as suspect. This is something we find in

⁴⁷ Fred, Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 281.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 4. In response to the question of why such a musical faculty would be adaptive, Lerdahl and Jackendoff speculate that the features specifying musical structure are not adaptive because of their application in a musical setting, but because of their usefulness in distinguishing pre-linguistic communication, e.g. cries of warning, articulations of emotion, etc. (Ibid., 281). Similar theories of music as evolutionary by-product are proposed by both musicologists (e.g. Mithen, *The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind, and Body*) and psychologists (e.g. Michael R. Trimble, *The Soul in the Brain: The Cerebral Basis of Language, Art, and Belief* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007]).

⁵⁰ Lerdahl and Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, 4.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1.

Chomsky's linguistics as well: a sense that the grammatical idiosyncrasies of particular languages detract from the purity of cognitive forms. Syntax is only one component of language, which contains a large number of functionally arbitrary semantic signs that decrease the percentage of linguistic communication that can be described as innate. 'Grammatical' structure, however, plays a more significant and defining role in music, which as we have seen has few, if any, arbitrary semantic units. This raises the possibility that by removing idiomatic idiosyncrasies we might achieve a purely natural music; indeed, that it is the concept of such a music that provides an objective standard by which musical perfection can be judged.

A prejudice against idiomatic elements of musical theory can be discerned in Lerdahl's distinction between natural and artificial grammars. While natural compositional grammar is that which is generated by our cognitive musical faculty, and thus constitutes a basic level of musical intelligibility, 'An artificial compositional grammar, on the other hand, can have a variety of sources — metaphysical, numerical, historical, or whatever'.⁵² Artificial grammars are generally related to natural grammar and specify elements of a particular musical style. The differences between Baroque and Classical compositions, for example, exist primarily on this artificial level: both manipulate tonal material, reflecting an awareness of natural constraints, but do so in stylistically distinct ways. 'The trouble starts', according to Lerdahl, 'only when the artificial grammar loses touch with the listening grammar'.⁵³ This is the case in much contemporary music, which is composed according to an entirely artificial compositional grammar. The result is that, 'To the degree that the applicability of these various aspects of [natural] musical grammar is attenuated [in modern music], the listener will infer less hierarchical structure from the musical surface. As a result, nonhierarchical aspects of musical perception (such as timbre and dynamics) tend to play a greater, compensatory role in musical organisation'.⁵⁴

For Lerdahl and Jackendoff, this is not simply a disinterested observation, but is evidence of the deficiency of modern music: the increased importance of timbre and dynamics does 'not [provide] compensation in kind'.⁵⁵ This prescriptive use of the natural elements of musical grammar is even more prominent in Lerdahl's series of

⁵² Fred Lerdahl, 'Cognitive Constraints on Compositional Systems', *Contemporary Music Review* 6:2 (1992), 101.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Lerdahl and Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, 298.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

explicit aesthetic claims, made in an article on the 'Cognitive Constraints of Compositional Systems'. 'The best music', he writes, 'utilises the full potential of our cognitive resources'.⁵⁶ Once again, the universal elements of musical form are given precedence over artificial extensions of music theory; artificial grammars must conform to natural musical grammar if the best possible music is to be achieved. Some stylistic variation is possible, but Lerdahl emphasises the extent to which natural grammar limits artificial innovation. His conclusions about the existence of a universal musical grammar are 'alarming because the constraints are tighter than I had bargained for'.⁵⁷

Yet musical form is not as strictly determined as it might seem. One of the most interesting features of Lerdahl and Jackendoff's theory is its use of 'preference rules' to explain the relative likelihood of various musical structures. Preference rules differentiate structural descriptions 'along a scale of coherence, weighting them as more or less "preferred" interpretations'.⁵⁸ This is a departure from generative linguistic grammar, which usually specifies a single, correct syntax for any particular grammatical construction. To take an example from English grammar, 'It today rained' is not a less preferred way of saying 'it rained today', but simply incorrect. In music, however, although some structures will appear more commonly and seem more natural than others, variant forms are not necessarily errors. The progression I-IV-V-I is one of the most common and preferred harmonic movements in Western music, but changing its final chord to vi is not incoherent in the same way that saying 'it today rained' is: substituting vi for I is unexpected (hence its designation as a 'deceptive' cadence), but not nonsensical.

Lerdahl and Jackendoff suggest that the reason for music's ambiguous grammar is that 'music is not tied down to specific meanings and functions, as language is. In a sense, music is pure structure, to be "played with" within certain bounds', a statement that unconsciously echoes Kant's idea of cognitive play.⁵⁹ It is music's lack of conceptual meaning that allows for the structural ambiguity required in aesthetic reflection. To some extent, this emphasis on ambiguity is simply the product of taking an aesthetic approach. Poetry provides a useful example of the importance of perspective, since our incorrect formation 'it today rained' might actually be 'correct' in a poetic context, where grammatical rules are often intentionally broken so as to create an ambiguous space in which we can indulge in the play of our cognitive powers. Ricoeur

⁵⁶ Lerdahl, 'Cognitive Constraints on Compositional Systems', 118.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 119.

⁵⁸ Lerdahl and Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, 9.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

makes this point with respect to poetic language, arguing that it ‘presents a certain “fusion” between meaning or sense and the senses’.⁶⁰ The normally transparent symbolism of words separates their meanings from their sounds; poetry seeks to recover the sensible aspects of language by obscuring the poem’s conceptual meaning through assonance, alliteration, etc., as well as non-standard grammatical formations. Ambiguous preference rules operate in poetic constructions precisely because in poetry we approach language from an aesthetic perspective.

With music, however, the situation is different: unlike language, music cannot be separated from an aesthetic perspective. Music that simply followed the rules, i.e. always presented the most preferred option, would be utterly banal, ceasing to be musical. Instead, it is the moments when music departs from the preferred structure, or presents a multiplicity of possible interpretations, that are the most aesthetically meaningful, since it is conceptual ambiguity that enables aesthetic reflection and cognitive play. Lerdahl and Jackendoff note that ‘the interesting musical issues usually concern what is the most coherent or “preferred” way to hear a passage’, thus implying that our aesthetic interest in music is, at least to a great extent, derived from passages that are structurally ambiguous.⁶¹

This observation, however, poses a serious challenge to claims that music reflects a generative grammar like that hypothesised for language, and reflects the same fundamental misunderstanding of musical art that we discerned in discussions of music as a representation of language. In a linguistic context, generative grammar is a means of explaining how we can quickly make conceptual sense out of novel utterances. By limiting the number of possible grammatical formulations, we are able to learn new languages and process unfamiliar forms of communication more easily. Music, however, is not primarily concerned with communication. In fact, what Lerdahl and Jackendoff inadvertently discover is that music is constantly including constructions that are intended to defy the prescriptions of their musical grammar. Whereas linguistic grammar proscribes formulations that do not conform to its fundamental rules, musical grammar actively promotes such transgressions. This distinction displays the fundamental difference between language’s conceptual communication and music’s aesthetic orientation, and thus provides a clue to the objective characteristics of aesthetic purposiveness. Objects appear formally purposive when the rules we believe govern their

⁶⁰ Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 209.

⁶¹ Lerdahl and Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, 9.

structure prove inadequate to provide a comprehensive explanation. Instead of working from the assumption of an innate musical faculty that defines prescriptive rules governing musical structure, then, we should view the nature of musical form as fundamentally rooted in this need to produce aesthetic ambiguity. In the words of Friedrich Schiller, music is fundamentally oriented towards ‘annihilating the material [i.e., the content of our expectations] by means of the form’.⁶²

4.2. Information Theory and Prediction

In contrast to a grammatical understanding of musical structure, Leonard Meyer’s information-theory approach places departures from our expectations at the centre of musical meaning.⁶³ Rather than positing a specific musical faculty, Meyer argues that musical structure reflects a basic feature of human cognition: the prediction and recognition of patterns. Music ‘involves relating sounds to one another in such a way that they form patterns’, and the significance of each musical element is determined by its position in this network of relationships.⁶⁴ Specifically, the importance of a musical event ‘lies in the fact that it leads the practised listener to expect, consciously or unconsciously, the arrival of a subsequent event or one of a number of alternative subsequent events’.⁶⁵ Meyer describes these predicted possibilities in terms reminiscent of Lerdahl’s and Jackendoff’s preference rules, except that instead of being features of an objective musical grammar, our predictions are formulated a posteriori from our experiences of music. Our expectations, which Meyer calls ‘subjective predictions’,

are entertained with varying degrees of certainty, depending upon what is *felt* to be the probability of any particular event in this specific set of musical circumstances. Or, viewed objectively: because of the way the human mind perceives patterns and because of the listener’s learned stylistic habits, one musical event implies subsequent musical events with particular degrees of probability.⁶⁶

David Huron elaborates on Meyer’s theory, identifying five different psychological response systems involved in the formulation and apperception of musical expectations. The ‘imagination response’ motivates us to consider future musical events, while

⁶² Friedrich Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 106.

⁶³ First presented in his seminal book, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (University of Chicago Press, 1956).

⁶⁴ Leonard B. Meyer, ‘On Rehearing Music’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 14:2 (1961), 260.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

the 'tension response' increases our physiological arousal in anticipation of the events predicted by our imagination. Once an event occurs, we then assess whether our prediction was correct (the 'prediction response'), and consider how the event might alter our expectations for the future. This final element occurs in two stages: a fast 'reaction response' that formulates an immediate course of thought or action, and a more considered 'appraisal response' that generates our final interpretation of the event.⁶⁷ Huron's scheme emphasises the importance of emotion in musical cognition. The accumulation of predictions in our imaginative response leads to the emotional tension of anticipation, while the assessment of our predictions is communicated emotionally: 'When the stimulus is expected, the emotional response is positively valenced; when the stimulus is unexpected, the emotional response is negatively valenced'.⁶⁸ Indeed, each response involved in creating and evaluating musical expectations has an emotional component, in which 'positive and negative emotions act as behavioural reinforcements', rewarding correct expectations and discouraging erroneous predictions while preparing us to react more adaptively in the future.⁶⁹

With less precision than Huron, Meyer also identifies the importance of emotion in our experience of musical expectations by asserting that musical predictions are *felt* rather than logically deduced. Rather than ideas generated objectively by an innate musical faculty, the predictions through which we engage with music are inherently subjective; they are not rules that can be conceptualised and catalogued, as Lerdaahl and Jackendoff would wish. As a result, our predictions reflect not only our general exposure to various musical styles, but our knowledge of particular works. Drawing on information theory, Meyer suggests that unexpected musical elements provide more information and thus more interest than those which are accurately predicted; those events that are least determined in our minds produce the most aesthetic interest. This fits well with the idea of cognitive play as the basic aesthetic experience, since our reflection is least bound by prior knowledge and expectation when the unexpected occurs, yet it would seem to contradict Huron's observation that incorrect predictions are linked with negative valence. We enjoy being surprised by music, even though our surprise indicates our expectations have been incorrect.

⁶⁷ David Brian Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 8–15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

Huron discusses psychological responses to musical surprise, which include senses of awe, weirdness, and laughter. Most common, however, is *frisson*, ‘the sensation of chills, thrills, or shivers’ linked with our fight response to danger.⁷⁰ In music, *frisson* is our response to events that are surprising, often dramatically so, but ultimately make organic sense within the context of the piece. This element of integrity distinguishes *frisson* from laughter, our response to events that defy expectations in a self-deprecating manner. So, for example, the use of incongruous sounds, implausible delays, or excessive repetition inspires laughter by making fun of musical conventions, while the early recapitulation in the first movement of Beethoven’s ‘Eroica’ Symphony does not make a joke out of musical conventions, but seeks to move beyond them for artistic effect.⁷¹ We generally react to unexpected musical events with feelings of *frisson*, invoking the fight rather than flight or freeze responses, because music poses no immediate danger. While *frisson* is fundamentally a negative affect, as we would expect from an event that defies expectations, it can nevertheless be enjoyable, particularly when the experience as a whole is evaluated by our appraisal response favourably. As Huron comments,

The appraisal response follows quickly on the heels of these reaction responses, and the neutral or positive appraisal quickly extinguishes the initial negative reaction. As listeners, we are left with the contrast in valence between the reaction/prediction and appraisal responses — a favourable contrast that leaves us with the sort of warm glow that contributes significantly to the attractiveness of music. In effect, when music evokes one of these strong emotions, the brain is simply realising that the situation is very much better than first impressions might suggest. In this regard, music is similar to other forms of pleasurable risk-taking.⁷²

Huron’s discussion of musical *frisson* helps answer one of the principle criticisms of Meyer’s information theory approach. As Donald Sherburne notes, ‘If the theory were correct, the first hearing of a work should reek with meaning and send emotional tingles to the tips of the toes; but with subsequent hearings the significance and emotional impact of a work ought to decline rapidly as the unexpected becomes the expected’.⁷³ Meyer offers six potential responses to this objection, all of which attempt

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 414.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 284–6. That is not to say that it is only the intention of the composer that matters, although this clearly plays an important role in distinguishing musical ‘jokes’ from artistic innovations.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷³ Donald W. Sherburne, ‘Meaning and Music’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 24:4 (1966), 580.

to demonstrate that while we may listen to a piece of music multiple times we never hear it the same way, whether because our ‘stylistic schemata’ have been subtly modified, we hear relationships that we had missed in previous hearings, or because we are not actually ‘listening’ to the music as much as we think we are. While none of these responses is particularly compelling, Huron points to empirical research suggesting that frisson responses are particularly resistant to modification.⁷⁴ This makes sense adaptively: once we have determined that a fight response is sufficient to counter a threat, it becomes less important to evaluate whether or not the threat is real.⁷⁵ It also indicates that our musical expectations are ‘primarily based on schematic expectations, and [that] these schema change only with extensive exposure’.⁷⁶



Ex. 2 — L. van Beethoven, Piano Concerto No. 5 ‘Emperor’ (Op. 73), 2nd mvt., mm. 1–10.

4.3. Musical Transcendence

The importance of frisson responses to our perception of music indicates that music is able to appear formally purposive without any specific purpose by actively subverting attempts to understand musical form conceptually. The cumulative effect of musical frisson responses is to draw our attention to what the music legitimately might have been, yet was not. To take a basic example, in the instrumental introduction to the second movement of Beethoven’s ‘Emperor’ Piano Concerto (Op. 73; ex. 2) there is a plagal cadence in the eighth bar that seems to end the second four-bar phrase, and provide closure to the melodic exposition of the first eight measures. We do not expect the orchestral intensification that follows, the melodic movement from the tonic

⁷⁴ Huron, *Sweet Anticipation*, 283.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 36.

to the less-stable third scale degree, nor the revelation that the cadential figure of measures seven and eight is in fact the initial fragment of a larger melodic line. Despite our expectation that the phrase will end with the cadence in bar eight, the music blossoms in a beautiful and quite unexpected way.

Each time music defies our expectations, it not only makes us aware of the inadequacy of our prediction — a conclusion with a negative emotional valence — but also creates more scope for the type of cognitive play characteristic of aesthetic experience. Music appears purposive — i.e., it seems to have a predictable structure — but we are in fact unable to predict, with absolute certainty, what will come next. Even the fact that at the end of the piece we can give a conceptual description of the music's structure does not diminish our sense that, although the piece has a definite form, we can give no reason why it must have unfolded as it did. This resistance to conceptual determination, however, is not taken to reflect a fundamental irrationality, but instead suggests an organising principle that is beyond our comprehension. The music does seem to follow an objective standard, but it remains elusive.

Julian Johnson describes instances of *frisson* as examples of intramusical transcendence. 'A musical work proposes itself not only as a set of musical materials but, implicitly, as a set of rules; a piece thus becomes literally transcendent by crossing the boundaries it has itself set up'.⁷⁷ Music is transcendent, and not simply irrational, because the decision to cross such boundaries does not seem arbitrary. Instead, instances of musical transcendence transform and make sense of that which has come before. Johnson describes this process in political terms as having a 'utopian function. It not only expresses or symbolises a transcendent moment; it enacts one as the music unfolds'.⁷⁸ Music is thus transcendent in a double sense: literally, through its defiance of expectations, while also metaphysically, in that it suggests an implicit reliance on a standard of perfection that is beyond our comprehension, one by which we judge music's literal transcendence in utopian, rather than dystopian terms.

5. Summary

What I have argued over the course of this chapter is that music is a free beauty: that its purposiveness is not derived from the representation of nature. Instead, music remains formally purposive by actively challenging attempts to define its structure according to specific, prescriptive rules. Whereas linguistic grammar circumscribes the

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music?*, 109.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

area of linguistic communication, musical grammar defines the conventions which individual compositions endeavour to surpass. It is this active resistance to formal determination that allows music to be purposive yet without a definite purpose. Yet while these observations may establish the objective existence of music's formal purposiveness, they still do not explain how it is that such intentional transgression of established formal rules is nevertheless construed as purposive rather than simply anarchic. This problem is compounded by the fact that music, as a human art, ought to be fully comprehensible. That it is not — as the importance of the frisson response demonstrates — calls into question the sovereignty of human cognition in a Kantian system and, in turn, highlights the metaphysical dependencies of aesthetic judgement.

In discussing frisson responses to musical structure, we have moved beyond a simple description of purposiveness in the musical object. As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, such a blurred distinction between purposiveness as it is possessed by the musical object, and our subjective aesthetic judgements of formal intelligibility, is inevitable when beauty is both an objective and subjective quality, as it is in Kant's aesthetics. Through our examination of the musical object we have demonstrated that music is an example of free beauty, and that it appears purposive despite lacking conceptual or representational content by being structured so as to thwart our expectations of conceptual purpose. On a psychological level, this inaccessibility to prediction initially produces a negative response, which becomes positive only in hindsight. Philosophically, we have considered how the nature of the musical object might lend itself to interpretations of purposiveness without a specific purpose. In the next chapter, however, we must combine this understanding of purposiveness as it relates to the musical object with an analysis of our subjective perception of musical beauty. Only by investigating the particular aspects of musical perception can we determine the relationship between natural and musical beauty, the reason for music's formal purposiveness, and the connection between musical beauty and the aesthetic transcendence of the *sensus communis*; it is to these questions that we now turn.

3

Aesthetic Perception of Music

You are the music while the music lasts — T. S. Eliot¹

1. Introduction

1.1. Summary of Previous Conclusions

We have seen how Immanuel Kant's aesthetics can function as a critical tool for analysing epistemological claims made in relation to human-mind-dependent knowledge. Because he argues that knowledge is constructed by our independent human minds, Kant's theory provides a rigorous challenge to claims that musical beauty is somehow related to knowledge of God. Yet, as I argued in chapter one, Kant is forced to make our aesthetic judgements dependent on an independent, metaphysical standard — one that can be interpreted theologically — so as to preserve their universal validity. If Kant is correct that we do intend our aesthetic judgements to apply universally, then even in a system where knowledge is made dependent on the individual human mind, external, metaphysical knowledge is required to explain our sense of the beautiful. In Peter Berger's terms, our experience of beauty functions as a signal of transcendence, betraying an implicit reliance on metaphysical knowledge that cannot be proven within a subjective philosophical system.

In the last chapter, then, we began to consider how this understanding of aesthetic judgement within a human-mind-dependent epistemology might be applied to music, and specifically to the question of its apparent theological significance. Beauty, according to Kant, is fundamentally a matter of perceiving an object's *formal pur-*

¹T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1944), 30.

posiveness: the mere fact of its intelligibility. As a consequence, beauty is both a property inherent in the object — the fact of its intelligibility — and the result of a subjective judgement — the recognition of formal purposiveness. Previously we discussed the intelligibility of musical objects, considering music, as far as possible, independently of human interpretation. Music presents a unique challenge to explanations of artistic beauty because it appears to be an example of free, rather than accessory, beauty. Whereas representational art is beautiful because of the intelligibility of the external objects it presents — thus making it subject to judgements of perfection related to the successfulness of its aesthetic representations — music provides an example of a pure aesthetic object, one that is neither representational nor judged against a conceptual standard of perception. I argued that music is, as Kant judged, a free beauty, and dismissed attempts to explain music in terms of linguistic representation. Unlike language, music uses its ‘rules’ as points of departure from which to challenge our expectations and transcend attempts to define musical meaning in conceptual terms. It is music’s inherent tendency to subvert conceptual determination that provides a basis for formal purposiveness in the musical object.

1.2. Chapter Outline

Building on these conclusions, we will in this chapter explore our aesthetic judgements of music from the perspective of the musical listener, so that we can understand how the metaphysical common sense identified in the first chapter functions in our experiences of musical beauty, and may in turn provide an epistemological explanation for music’s apparent theological significance. Because music occupies an ambivalent position in Kantian aesthetics, it is unclear how we should understand our perception of musical beauty; whether it shares more in common with our appreciation of other human arts, or with the beauty of nature. Just as theories of linguistic meaning functioned as a counterpoint through which to analyse the nature of purposiveness in the musical object, in this chapter I will draw on James J. Gibson’s theory of ecological perception as a means of interrogating the process of musical perception. By using its principles to understand our perception of natural beauty, we can then compare our perception of natural beauty with that of music to determine how music is able to appear irreducibly purposive despite being a human creation, and how the unique characteristics of musical beauty can be understood to contribute to a sense of theological significance, mediated epistemologically by a metaphysical common sense.

Our perception of musical beauty parallels in many ways our experience of beauty in nature while not, as with representational forms of art, simply directing our attention towards instances of natural beauty. Musical beauty is distinct from the beauty of nature, and yet seems to operate in a similar way. What I will argue is that as the music unfolds it creates its own ‘musical worlds’, which, like nature and unlike the fictional worlds produced by other arts, are radically open-ended: music’s subversion of conceptual meaning prevents us from developing a coherent understanding of its aesthetic world. Musical beauty, I will suggest, is philosophically independent of nature but, in practice, subsequent to it: its unique aesthetic characteristics allow us to perceive music as a free beauty, without reference to the beauty of nature, but such aesthetic independence is only possible because musical worlds are contained within the actual, natural world. This conclusion not only has ramifications for theological understandings of music’s significance, but also identifies a particularly strong connection between our perception of musical beauty and the metaphysical knowledge imparted by Kant’s *sensus communis*, which we explore in relation to theories of religious experience in the following chapter.

2. Perception of Natural Beauty

2.1. Theory of Ecological Perception

I have suggested that Gibson’s theory of ecological perception, which describes in psychological terms the interaction between judgement and an object’s formal intelligibility, provides a useful means of exploring how the characteristics of beautiful objects and our aesthetic judgements interrelate. The key feature of Gibson’s approach is the assertion that perception is an interactive process, mediated between the needs of the subject and the potential inherent in the object. How we perceive a fallen tree along a forest path depends on the context in which it is encountered. If we are cold, it is fuel; if we are tired, it is a seat; if we are in a hurry it is an obstacle, but it is not a seat or fuel. And yet there is a sense in which the tree, from an objective perspective, is all three — obstacle, seat, and fuel — and not a means of locomotion, or source of food. Gibson calls such interactive properties ‘affordances’, or what the environment ‘offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill’.² While affordances are

in a sense objective, real, and physical, unlike values and meanings, which are often supposed to be subjective, phenomenal, and mental.... actually, an affordance is neither an ob-

² James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 127.

jective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behaviour.³

Music's communication of conceptual meaning largely operates on this level of affordance. Debussy's *La Mer* can afford a sense of rushing motion and fluidity or, if we know the title, a 'depiction' of the sea. It does not, however, allow us to hear a funeral march, or unmitigated grief. In one sense, then, what we hear in the music depends on what we are seeking to discover, so that we hear the sea when we have been primed to expect it. In another, the music itself nevertheless seems to limit the possible correct interpretations.⁴ Thus, although affordances must be actualised by the needs of the subject, 'the affordance of something does *not change* as the need of the observer changes. The observer may or may not perceive or attend to the affordance, according to his needs, but the affordance, being invariant, is always there to be perceived'.⁵ When we hear a motorcycle drive past, many of its acoustic properties are in flux: the pitch changes due to the Doppler effect, the loudness varies with distance. But there are other properties of the motorcycle's sound that do not change, and which allow us to identify it as a motorcycle despite changes of pitch and amplitude. There are also properties of its sound that allow us to group it with other motorcycles, but not with cars; or that mark it as a motor vehicle in the most general sense. These characteristics that remain constant across different individual instances, and which allow us to categorise and generalise about our world, are called 'invariants'. Thus, there are certain features about a sullen face that are not only constant for all people, allowing us to identify emotions from facial expressions, but can be applied to other objects as well; hence why we see the Saint Bernard's face as sad.

³ Ibid., 129.

⁴ This idea that affordances limit possible interpretations without becoming determining is paralleled in discussions of subject-position in studies of film and drama: 'On the one hand there is the empirical spectator whose interpretation of film will be determined by all manner of extraneous factors like personal biography, class origins, previous viewing experience, the variables of conditions of reception, etc. On the other hand the abstract notion of a "subject-position", which could be defined as the way in which a film solicits, demands even, a certain closely circumscribed response from the reader by means of its own formal operations.... This distinction seems fruitful, inasmuch as it accepts that different individuals can interpret a text in different ways, while insisting that the text itself imposes definite limits on their room to manoeuvre. In other words, it promises a method which avoids the infinite pluralism which posits as many readings as there are readers, and an essentialism which asserts a single "true" meaning' (Shelia Johnston, 'Film narrative and the structuralist controversy,' in *The Cinema Book*, ed. P. Cook [London: British Film Institute, 1985], 245).

⁵ Ibid., 138–9.

Invariants that specify an object or a state can include not only natural characteristics but also culture- and context-specific cues. The word ‘their’ has certain acoustical properties, but it is only identifiable as a third-person possessive pronoun through a combination of sound, context (did he say ‘their’ or ‘there?’), and culture (knowledge of English). Other, more deep-seated associations can also be involved, such as that in primates between a rising tone of voice and weakness or insecurity.⁶ Importantly, there is no hierarchy of which kinds of invariants are most fundamental to our perceptions; they all work together in a process akin to Bayesian analysis, where judgments of probability are made and refined through the incorporation of additional pieces of information. Each invariant, whether related to harmonic structure, style, or instrumentation, provides a piece of perceptual ‘evidence’, from which our overall impression of the music is constructed. Thus, ‘Higher order invariants [specifying musical style] are no more abstract than the most specific and local invariant that is unique to one particular context... in every case the invariant is a set of relationships that is available in the stimulus information’.⁷

These sets of relationships specify not only objects, but also directly specify affordances themselves: ‘The basic affordances of the environment are perceivable and are usually perceivable directly, without an excessive amount of learning’.⁸ Gibson discusses this assertion in terms of visual perception, but his analysis applies equally to sound: ‘If a surface is horizontal, flat, extended, rigid, and knee-high relative to the perceiver, it can in fact be sat upon. If it can be discriminated as having just these properties, it should *look* sit-on-able. If it does, the affordance is perceived visually’.⁹ When we hear a symphony, we do not first analyse its structure, its instrumentation, and its context, only then to perceive that it is a piece of classical music, but we instead hear the invariants that afford this interpretation directly, at the same time that we hear invariants specifying key, structure, and dynamic. It is generally adaptive for us to focus on the big picture — it is more important to see a jaguar than to consciously distinguish its spots — and so we tend to seek higher-order affordances first. Knowing that I am listening to a symphony influences my actions (depending on the

⁶ This principle not only features in the interrogative mood of many languages but also, according to one recent paper, accounts for the emotional associations between minor modes and sadness or uncertainty (Norman D. Cook, ‘The Sound Symbolism of Major and Minor Harmonies’, *Music Perception* 23:3 [2007]).

⁷ Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 35–6.

⁸ Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, 143.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

context, do I listen attentively, talk loudly to my neighbour, or change the radio station?) in a way that hearing a perfect cadence is less likely to do. When we look at the world, what we are looking *for* are affordances that guide actions.

2.2. Ecological Perception of Beauty

Gibson's theory is particularly helpful for understanding our perception of natural beauty in a Kantian system because the interaction he describes between affordances and subjective desires is paralleled in Kant's description of aesthetic judgements. In judgements of natural beauty we are aware of the formal purposiveness of nature through an iterative process of attempting to determine the specific conceptual purpose of a natural object. In aesthetic judgments, we experience the play of our cognitive powers when we recognise an object as being formally purposive, yet cannot identify any specific purpose that is able to function as 'the basis of the possibility of the object itself'.¹⁰ Yet just because we are unable to discern such a comprehensive explanation for natural forms does not mean that we cannot identify any conceptual content or teleological end. To the contrary, it is precisely our ability to read our own interpretations into the affordances of nature, without ever fully comprehending the natural world, that establishes its formal purposiveness. We know that a fallen tree does not exist exclusively for our use — whether as fuel or shelter, or as evidence for a theory of gravity. Even so, the fact that the world seems intelligible in its limited interaction with our needs suggests a greater, intrinsic purposiveness.

This does not in any way provide a conclusive argument for a teleological or rational understanding of nature. Rather, it merely suggests that we do view nature in such terms, constructing narratives in order to explain its purpose insofar as it relates to us. This is precisely the fact that Kant seeks to highlight by insisting that objects conform to our cognition: we construct an understanding of the world that imbues it with a purposiveness that reflects the structures of our cognition. Formal purposiveness, then, is an awareness that although our individual efforts to understand the purposes behind the natural world will inevitably fall short, the noumenal world is nevertheless structured in a purposive way, and thus fundamentally consistent with the structures of our cognition. One of the key difficulties of any subjective system is to demonstrate how it is possible to have knowledge of things outside our minds without our minds subsequently becoming dependent on such extra-mental knowledge. Kant's solution, as we have seen, is twofold, involving both an a priori assertion that the noumenal world is, in fact, pur-

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 227.

positive, and also a posteriori confirmation of this fact in the correspondence between our cognitive understanding of nature and its phenomenal presentation.

Aesthetic judgement plays an important role in this process of a posteriori verification because our judgements of beauty are a reflection of the formal purposiveness perceived in nature. In terms of ecological perception, natural beauty seems to afford an infinite number of interpretations, prompting the cognitive play of aesthetic judgement as we attempt to discern a single purpose that forms the basis of possibility for the object. Although the beauty of nature is infinite, it nevertheless appears limited in certain respects: just as we cannot hear *La Mer* as an expression of unmitigated grief, so, too, the structure of nature appears to limit possible interpretations. We can view a beautiful sunrise as an expression of God's love, or as the refraction of light as it passes through the Earth's atmosphere at an oblique angle. We have difficulty, however, viewing even the singular beauty of a particular sunrise as an isolated or random incident; we feel that there must be some form of rational or teleological explanation behind its beauty. It is this sense that the world is formally purposive — that there is a comprehensive explanation for its characteristics that conforms to the structure of our cognition — that typifies our aesthetic judgements of free beauty. By extrapolating from our success at positing limited explanations for a natural phenomenon, we become aware of a higher principle of purposiveness that limits and shapes our cognitive play. Again, such an awareness of formal purposiveness involves a logical leap: one consistent with the structure of our cognition, and therefore to some extent unavoidable within a subjective philosophical system, but strictly an unjustified conclusion nevertheless. Through this process, the infinite yet directed affordance of natural beauty leads to the aesthetic appreciation of formal purposiveness in cognitive play.

The theory of ecological perception would suggest that, in addition to affording specific interpretations of purpose, nature also affords this judgement of its formal purposiveness. In judging the beauty of nature we not only, through cognitive play, attempt to discover its conceptual purpose, but also to a certain extent read intelligibility into nature. Thus we cannot conclude, from nature's affordance of such an interpretation, that it is actually purposeful, but we can nevertheless observe that beauty is an objective property of nature as well as the product of a subjective judgement.

2.3. Temporal Perception of Sublimity

More challenging, however, is developing an ecological understanding of sublimity's characteristic contrapurposiveness. Unlike beauty, which affords through extrapolation

from cognitive play judgements of formal purposiveness, Kant insists that the sublime is fundamentally resistant to our cognition. The sublime does not afford cognitive play, but actively impedes the imposition of even limited understandings of purpose. Kant gives the example of a raging storm: the wind and the rain at first appear nihilistic, but when considered in detachment the fury of the storm does not seem arbitrary or mindless; even in destruction, nature appears purposive.¹¹ Unlike the purposiveness we find in beauty, however, this sense that the sublime has an intelligible, albeit incomprehensible, source does not reflect an objective purposiveness in the sublime object. A raging storm does not appear intelligible because it affords an interpretation of purposiveness; on the contrary, its chaotic, destructive power defies attempts to identify even limited explanations of purpose.¹² Whereas we are able to perceive the intelligibility of natural beauty *prima facie* — and are encouraged from our awareness of limited purposes to postulate a comprehensive, universal purpose — with the sublime our aesthetic judgements are entirely subjective, and we are unable to rely on the nature of the object to provide evidence of intelligibility.

One of the distinctions between judgements of beauty and the sublime is that while beauty requires the consideration of an object's complete form, the sublime can be *unbounded*; in Kant's words, it 'can also be found in a formless object, insofar as we present unboundedness, either [as] in the object or because the object prompts us to present it, while yet we add to this unboundedness the thought of its totality'.¹³ This statement is intriguing on a number of levels. In the first place, Kant identifies two ways in which an object can appear unbounded, and thus eligible for the designation 'sublime'. On the one hand, an object can, as we have discussed, defy our attempts at explanation, and thus prompt us to posit a purposiveness for it that is beyond our comprehension. A chaotic natural phenomenon like the weather provides a good example of this type of unboundedness, where the barrier to understanding is the limited nature of human cognition. We cannot trace, to use the classic example, how the beating of a butterfly's wings in Africa translates into a tornado in the midwestern United States, because we lack both

¹¹ Ibid., 261.

¹² When I speak of limited purposes, I do not mean explanations for individual elements of an object or experience, but rather explanations for the totality of the experience that nevertheless lack comprehensiveness. Explaining a tree fallen in the forest as a seat, for example, is to suggest a limited purpose for the entirety of the object. The sublime may be intelligible — and thus afford the imposition of specific purposes — in part, but not, crucially, as a whole. An understanding of rain, for example, is insufficient to explain the totality of the raging storm; the rain may be purposive, but we cannot extrapolate from the purposiveness of an individual element to the intelligibility of the whole.

¹³ Ibid., 244.

the knowledge of initial conditions, and the capacity to model meteorological systems in sufficient detail.¹⁴ The tornado is sublime — when viewed from a position of safety — because its most basic level of intelligibility, if such intelligibility exists, lies beyond the means of human cognition. Chaotic systems only make sense when viewed as a whole, something we are incapable of doing. Instead of experiencing formal purposiveness, then, we are aware of a contrapurposiveness that is nevertheless interpreted as being indicative of some incomprehensible purpose.

On the other hand, however, an object can be sublime because it is *actually* unbounded, and thus ineligible to quality as beautiful. Chaotic systems are only unbounded from the perspective of human cognition: the tornado is sublime because we cannot understand its formal and final causes, not necessarily because such causes do not exist, or are incomplete. In theological terms, God is the only ‘object’ that is truly unbounded in an absolute sense. Although all elements of creation are, consequently, bounded in this absolute sense, within the flow of time objects and experiences may nevertheless be incomplete, and thus unbounded temporally. Part of what makes a storm sublime is our ignorance of what will happen next and of how the sublime experience will ultimately be resolved. Kant notices that, when confronted with the sublime, we attempt to complete its unboundedness by positing potential totalities. As the discussion of frisson responses in the previous chapter suggests, there is an element of cognitive danger in attempts to predict the form of an incomplete experience. This danger — viz., the chance that our prediction will be wrong — in turn involves us in our experiences of the sublime to a much greater emotional extent than in judgements of beauty.

In instances of natural sublimity, then, we experience both types of contrapurposiveness simultaneously: the cognitive incomprehensibility of the sublime experience’s purpose and its temporal incompleteness. Of the two, the first is more powerful, since it reflects the inherent limitations of our cognition and is not simply a matter of temporal ignorance. It may be possible to experience temporal sublimity alone, but it is difficult to imagine a situation in the natural world in which this is occurs. Regardless, Kant argues that in both instances we attempt to make the unboundedness of the sublime bounded by projecting an idea of the object’s totality. We perceive the unbounded contrapurposiveness of the sublime as purposive by supplying our own purposive totality, one that makes sense of the incomplete fragment of sublime experience by incorporating it into an intelligible whole. Importantly, the sublime experience is not, in and of itself, intelli-

¹⁴ The destruction of a tornado also raises theological questions about the goodness of God, the nature of creation, etc., that would likewise seem to defy human attempts at explanation on a teleological level.

gible; unlike a beautiful object it does not possess an objective purposiveness corresponding to a single, comprehensive purpose. In judging something to be sublime, we are asserting that this lack of intelligibility is not simply the result of randomness or anarchy, but instead reflects some form of ignorance that prevents us from perceiving its purposiveness; an ignorance that can either reflect the limitations of our cognition, or incompleteness in time. The storm would be purposive, if only we were able to comprehend its physical and teleological dimensions in sufficient clarity.

It is this idea of projected purposiveness that primarily distinguishes judgements of beauty and the sublime. In judgements of beauty, we perceive an object's formal purposiveness directly, reading intelligibility out of the object, and subsequently positing our own, limited ideas of purpose. In ecological terms, the object's formal purposiveness affords the imposition of specific ideas of purpose. With the sublime, however, there is no affordance of purposiveness. Instead of the ecological interaction between affordances and cognitive needs that we find in judgements of beauty, with the sublime the 'interaction' is all one-sided: we read purposiveness into the object by positing a completion that would, if true, transform the sublime experience from contrapurposiveness into intelligibility. To take an analogous example, the letters 'chthy' are unintelligible in English, unless we posit that they form a part of a larger word, like 'ichthyosaur', in which context they become meaningful. Similarly, we perceive experiences of the sublime as incomplete rather than simply nonsensical, giving them meaning by projecting a larger, purposive context.

According to Kant, aesthetic judgement is more fundamental than teleology because it concerns the basic correspondence between the world and the structures of our cognition. As he states, it 'alone contains a principle that judgement lays completely a priori at the basis of its reflection on nature: the principle of a formal purposiveness of nature... without which principle the understanding could not find its way about in nature'.¹⁵ The formal purposiveness we perceive in the beauty of nature provides objective confirmation that the structure of nature and the forms of our cognition agree. In the sublime, however, no such confirmation exists: we attempt to make sense of nature's contrapurposiveness by imposing our own context of intelligibility. The sublime, then, does not so much reflect the structure of nature as the features of human cognition. In particular, it provides evidence for the strength of our a

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

priori conviction that the world is, in fact, intelligible, even if we are unable to perceive this purposiveness directly.

Previously, we saw that aesthetic judgements are dependent on a metaphysical principle — the *sensus communis* — that is not only regulative for cognition, but actually constitutive. The a priori belief that objects do conform to our minds follows logically from the fact of cognition. In other words, for human cognition to function in relation to nature, the natural world must be intelligible. We do not need to know how this happens, or why this is the case, only that there is a correspondence between natural structure and our human minds. The belief that nature is purposive thus appears to be a regulatory principle of cognition — in that it must be true given the existence of human thought — but not actually constitutive of such thought; i.e., nature's purposiveness is not necessary for our cognition. I have suggested, however, that in the area of aesthetic judgement this principle of natural purposiveness does directly shape our aesthetic determinations. Without a metaphysical standard of purposiveness our judgements of beauty would not have universal validity. The importance of the *sensus communis* is even more pronounced in judgements of sublimity, since we supply a totality that gives the unbounded, contrapurposive experience intelligibility. This construction does not extrapolate from the objective purposiveness of the object, or from the imposition of any specific conceptual understanding of purpose, but instead reflects the fundamental, inaccessible constitution of our cognition. While all aesthetic judgements rely on a metaphysical principle of purposiveness, judgements of the sublime are particularly and obviously dependent on a common sense from which a purposive totality can be constructed.

3. Perception of Musical Beauty

3.1. Frisson and the Sublime

As we have seen, musical beauty presents a unique challenge to Kantian aesthetics, since it is both a human art, and therefore comprehensible and bounded, while also appearing to be a free beauty, i.e., not responsible to any conceptual standard of perfection. In the previous chapter, I argued that the resistance of the musical object to conceptual determination allows it to be understood as formally purposive, rather than as communicating any particular purpose. In ecological terms, music affords an interpretation of purposiveness by seeming both intelligible and yet subverting the imposition of conceptual understandings. Music provides a starting-point for improvisation, rather than limiting

musical utterance. Umberto Eco describes the work of art as a type of message: 'Unlike most messages, instead of aiming at transmitting a univocal meaning, the work of art succeeds precisely insofar as it appears ambiguous and open-ended'.¹⁶ Music, I have argued, takes this process to an extreme by actively distorting our expectations, to the point that it becomes, in Susanne Langer's terms, an 'unconsummated symbol', possessing the form of a message but none of its content.

In terms of our subjective aesthetic perception of beauty and the sublime, music's affordance of formal purposiveness is once again difficult to categorise. On the one hand, music's formal structure appears immediately intelligible: individual pitches are given temporal durations and organised into chords, rhythms, melodies and phrases. Musical form reflects Lerdahl's and Jackendoff's musical grammar, as well as the acoustic characteristics of sound and cultural conventions. Even so, we have seen that such explanations of musical form remain incomplete; that one of the defining features of musical structure is its recurring transcendence of formal expectations. Music seems intelligible, yet on closer inspection resists attempts to define the source of this intelligibility. I argued that it is this characteristic of musical form that allows it to be perceived as purposive, yet without a discernible purpose, and enables it to be understood as a free beauty. Music is beautiful because it appears formally purposive *prima facie*, yet the means by which it achieves this semblance of formal intelligibility — particularly its evocation of negative affective ('frisson') responses — are actually more akin to our experiences of the sublime than the beautiful.

That music could be understood as sublime within a Kantian aesthetic is surprising, since Kant believes that, because human creations are by definition both comprehensible and bounded, only nature can provide experiences of sublimity. When considered as discrete aesthetic objects, musical works are obviously bounded, and thus objects of beauty rather than sublimity. Elements of musical form that transgress and surpass the strictures of musical grammar may remain inexplicable, indicating a dependence on the metaphysical *sensus communis*, but we can nevertheless document the purposiveness which such innovations express. To take an example from architecture, we can identify that the beauty of a Classical façade reflects the proportions of the golden section — thus demonstrating the objective basis for judgements of formal purposiveness — without being able to explain why the golden section is aesthetically pleasing. In Aristotelian

¹⁶Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 195.

terms, with beautiful objects we can identify the formal cause, but cannot necessarily explain it, nor can we be certain of the final cause behind the form.

With music, however, it is important to distinguish between aesthetic contemplation of the musical object in its totality, and our perception of music in time.¹⁷ Whereas the musical object considered as a whole is circumscribed, musical performances unfold through time and are consequently, in a temporal sense, unbounded. It is this temporal unboundedness of musical performance that allows us to perceive music as free beauty. Music's form indicates a fundamental intelligibility, while its 'grammatical' transgressions undermine our specific conceptual expectations by elevating the music, however briefly, to the level of the sublime. Although musical sublimity is only fleeting, and reflects what I argued is a lesser type, dependent on temporal incompleteness, it is nevertheless sufficient to preserve the formal purposiveness of music from conceptual determination, and thus establish music's status as free beauty.

We can observe this interaction between judgements of beauty and those of the sublime when considering our emotional reactions to music. Peter Kivy draws a distinction between emotions we recognise in music and those we actually experience, observing that 'People who go to concerts of melancholy music, at least in my experience, show no signs, either in the concert hall, or outside it, immediately thereafter, of having been depressed by the experience. More often than not... they are exhilarated'.¹⁸ Kivy presents this exhilaration as the key to the mystery of emotions felt in music. Emotions are physiological reactions we experience because of beliefs or interpretations we give to objects and events, following the sequential form of object-belief-feeling. With music, the performance constitutes the object, and our judgement of its aesthetic value provides the component of belief. Assuming that our judgement is positive — that we believe the music to be beautiful — the feeling produced is one of "excitement", or "exhilaration", or "wonder", or "awe", or "enthusiasm". It is... that emotional "high" one gets when experiencing things that one thinks are wonderful or beautiful'.¹⁹ While Kivy does not explicitly draw a connection between this theory of emotion in music and philosophical discussions of aesthetic judgement, what he outlines is simply the traditional view that aesthetic determinations are fundamentally

¹⁷ Jeremy Begbie similarly identifies an association between music's temporality and its theological significance (Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* [Cambridge University Press, 2000]).

¹⁸ Peter Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 121.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 130–31.

matters of feeling: that beautiful music is pleasing, while we react with displeasure towards music that lacks aesthetic interest.

The problem with Kivy's theory is that it does not seem to capture the full range of our emotional engagement with music. Music is not simply thrilling, but can also be calming, inspiring, jarring or even upsetting. While he is right to distinguish between emotions we recognise in music and our personal emotional reactions, these individual responses are not limited to the cognitive pleasure and displeasure of aesthetic judgements. We often identify quite strongly with the emotions we experience in music, indicating that the disinterested pleasure of aesthetic judgement is not their only source. The basic limitation of Kivy's account is that it treats our experiences of music retrospectively and holistically, rather than acknowledging that emotional reactions also change during the course of performance, and with repeated hearings. Judgements of beauty are, by definition, holistic: we can only judge an object's aesthetic merit once its entire form has been presented; beauty is bounded. There is a tendency for us to think of musical works as complete, bounded objects, and thus to be particularly aware of our final judgements of beauty. When we leave the concert hall after a performance, we are more likely to remember and experience the aesthetic pleasure produced by the performance as a whole rather than individual moments of surprise or tension. Yet these more transient emotions are equally responses to the music, and often seem more personally relevant as they occur than our general aesthetic pleasure feels afterwards.

In the previous chapter we considered the role played by emotions in predictions of musical form. Leonard Meyer and David Huron both argued that the emotions we experience *during* music represent physiological responses to the expectations we generate as we follow the formal structure of the music. We experience a sense of expectancy and tension as we listen for the music to conform to our expectations, and a sense of surprise or 'frisson' when our predictions are thwarted. These emotional, non-conceptual judgements of musical form are doubly involving: they require us to listen, as it were, *within* the music, paying attention to the relationship between different formal structures, as well as invoking the fight or flight response associated with our general capacity to make predictions about future events. As we become familiar with a particular piece or style of music, what was initially unexpected becomes predictable, and thus loses its emotional impact. Even so, frisson responses are particularly robust and continue to be felt even after repeated hearings.

Frisson is a *negative* affect, which is subsequently replaced by a positive appraisal of the unexpected event. This secondary emotional reaction is an aesthetic judgement: we approve of the surprise because we judge it to be aesthetically preferable to our initial expectation. Even so, because our reaction is initially negative and our reappraisal occurs during the course of work — before we are able to give a comprehensive judgement of its beauty — frisson provides emotional evidence that we react to unexpected features of musical form as we would to the sublime. According to Kant, pleasure in the sublime ‘arises only indirectly: it is produced by the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital forces followed immediately by an outpouring of them that is all the stronger’.²⁰ Similarly, our pleasure in unexpected musical forms arises only after — and in direct response to — the negative affect produced by frisson; which, as Kant observes, actually increases our subsequent aesthetic pleasure. Moreover, just as in the sublime we are challenged to give completion to an experience that is *unbounded*, so, too, in our experiences of music we constantly attempt to see beyond the temporal horizon to a holistic awareness of the music’s form. While such comprehensive knowledge is possible in hindsight — and, in fact, forms the basis for our retrospective judgements of beauty and related feelings of pleasure — it is not available during a performance.

Music as it unfolds through time thus is unbounded; examples of frisson challenge our attempts to discern music’s formal purpose by initially seeming to reflect the contrapurposiveness of the sublime rather than the intelligibility of beauty. In the Beethoven example from the previous chapter (ch. 2, ex. 2), measure eight only becomes truly intelligible once we have heard the measures that follow; if we were to judge it without the benefit of this context, we would hear it in a very different way, as simply the ending of a phrase rather than the initiation of another. Another example of this principle is Chopin’s Prelude Op. 28 No. 20 (ex. 1), which consists of three four-bar phrases, the second two of which are harmonically and melodically identical. The structure of the Prelude is so firmly established — crochet movement with dotted figures every third beat, organised into four-bar phrases — that measure thirteen comes as quite a surprise: a single, sustained chord, different in rhythm and register, accented, and violating the four-bar phrase structure. Yet it is this final measure that in many ways makes the piece, tying the individual phrases into a complete, bounded whole. As Kant observes, we cannot judge the beauty of an object without perceiving it in its entirety; any judgements made on the basis of a part alone are likely to be

²⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 245.

wrong. Even expert knowledge of a particular work does not completely remove this sense of temporal aesthetic incomprehension, as variations in individual performances inevitably producing new sources of frisson. Although this reaction has perhaps been dulled by the existence of authoritative recordings, familiarity with recorded interpretations can actually make the variations of live performance even more surprising.



Ex. 1 — F. Chopin, Prelude in C minor, Op. 28 No. 20.

3.2. Narrative Worlds

I have argued that music, as it is experienced in time, evinces both the objective purposiveness of beautiful objects, and the unbounded contrapurposefulness of the sublime. This sublimity, however, is of a peculiar sort, given the fact that music is a human art and thus incapable of being sublime under Kant's definition. In the first place, musical sublimity is entirely dependent on its temporal unboundedness, reflecting the limitations imposed on human cognition by its existence in time. We are unable to grasp a composition's structure because it is incomplete, not because it is inherently beyond human comprehension.²¹ As a result, musical sublimity is fleeting, quickly resolved into intelligibility as our expectations are re-evaluated based on new musical

²¹ This is, of course, leaving aside the question of how we arrive at a standard of purposiveness in the first place, which I have argued does require a metaphysical common sense.

events. These differences, I would suggest, indicate that our experiences of sublimity in music do not operate on the same level as the sublime in nature, but rather represent that which seems contrapurposive within the music's unique interpretive sphere.

Humans have an innate tendency to read narratives into our experience of the world.²² In Kantian terms, we seek to impose purposes (both formal and teleological) onto the purposiveness of nature. Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that works of art use this tendency to narrate our experiences to create their own artistic 'worlds'.²³ A novel, for example, creates its own world in which characters and events are manipulated to form a single, coherent story. Novels differ from the real world in that, when we take a position outside their narrative world, we are able to identify the precise purpose behind every narrative event. When we read narratives into the real world we can only hazard a guess as to the purpose behind nature's purposiveness. In interpreting a novel, however, we can easily discern not only why each event occurs but also how it contributes to the narrative's overall goal. Even so, assuming the story has been well-crafted, the characters inhabiting the world should not themselves be able to see their futures; internally, the narrative world should accurately depict the purposeless purposiveness of nature.

Importantly, when we read a novel or watch a play, we do not remain outside the narrative but become active participants in it. Roger Scruton provides the example of a mime depicting an emotion to illustrate this point: we might say 'behind that expression there is feeling. But of course I do not attribute the feeling to anyone, least of all to the actor before me. I have "entered into" an absent state of mind'.²⁴ We become involved in the fictional narrative, accepting its postulation of a theatrical subject who feels the emotion depicted by the mime. This type of third-person relationship is the most common form of engagement with artistic worlds: we enter into the narrative, but only as an omniscient observer. Scruton observes, however, that first-person engagement is also possible, when by 'observing a gesture or expression, we may have the experience of... "knowing what it's like", whereby the gesture becomes, in imagination, our own. We then feel it, not from the observer's, but from the subject's point of view'.²⁵ By identifying with a particular character or situation, the narrative becomes even more immediately present. Even if our engagement remains third-person, how-

²² George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by* (Chicago University Press, 1980).

²³ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

²⁴ Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 363.

²⁵ Ibid.

ever, whenever we read a book or watch a film we become a part of the story: we are *there* in the narrative.

Eric Clarke documents this process of narrative involvement in music, recording the changing nature of his relationship with music's narrative world over the course of Mozart's String Quintet in C Major (K. 515). At the beginning the texture is polyphonic, and he consequently feels more like 'an observer than a participant: the cello and violin parts specify very different kinds of motion... and for this reason... they specify distinct "agents" in motion relative to one another.... I experience this as the actions of two separate agents of motion, with myself as onlooker'.²⁶ When this dialogue ceases and the four parts move homophonically, however, 'The separate parts merge into a single body with a complex movement, one with which I now identify, rather than simply overhear'.²⁷ This type of textual change in perspective is frequently used by composers to produce narrative effects. Towards the end of the C-sharp-minor fugue from the first book of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, for example, the five different voices suddenly coalesce into an almost homophonic texture that ties the different polyphonic strands together and pulls the listener into the coda. Similarly, in the third movement of Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 132 ('In the Lydian mode'), Beethoven relieves the almost unbearable intensity of the homophonic, *stile antico* texture with periods of more polyphonic, and thus narratively detached, writing.²⁸

3.3. Musical Worlds and the Representation of Nature

In the previous chapter, I argued that music is distinguished from other arts, including literature, because it does not represent nature. Whereas a novel seeks to recreate the purposiveness of nature in its narrative world, musical 'worlds' are not representations of nature. As a consequence, the artistic worlds created by musical compositions are unique in many respects. Kendal Walton observes that although 'literary and pictorial representations establish *fictional worlds*,' it is difficult to see how 'Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* and Brahms's symphonies have fictional worlds, as *Crime and Punishment*

²⁶ Clarke, *Ways of Listening*, 86.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ The association between harmonic texture and the mode of narrative engagement offers numerous interpretive possibilities. In analysing the stylistic changes that occurred during the English Reformation, for example, we can observe that Thomas Tallis's '*Gaude gloriosa*', a polyphonic tour-de-force written during the reign of Queen Mary, affords a passive response in keeping with the limited liturgical role of the congregation in Marian England, while his homophonic, Edwardian setting of 'If ye love me' invites more personal engagement, not simply because it is written in English, but because of the different affordances of the music itself.

and *Hamlet* do'.²⁹ We may be able to interpret music with a specific program as a straightforward narrative, with implied characters, settings, and actions. In overtly emotional works, like the eighteenth variation of Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*, we might even construe 'narrative' in a more static way: Rachmaninoff's variation evokes images of happiness, love, and contentment that do not tell a story, but nevertheless set a narrative scene.

I have asserted, however, that these forms of natural representation are not intrinsic to musical art. Thus, we cannot understand the nature of musical worlds in and of themselves by observing particular instances when they are given narrative shape through representation. In music without such obvious natural representation, Walton argues that while the imagination is still involved in constructing a musical narrative, music does not actually construct a fictional world like that of a novel or film. Instead, 'If musical works do have worlds, they are zoos — full of life, but discrete bits of life, each in its own separate cage — not a working ecological system... There will rarely be a plot line for the listener to follow'.³⁰ Although a book or a painting may function as 'prop in a game of make-believe', giving us access to the fictional worlds they create, if we think of music in these terms, 'The picture seems to be that of a succession of momentary skit fragments, unrelated to one another. This picture contrasts starkly with the profound sense we often have of the unity and coherence of musical works'.³¹ There is a strong sense that music is not simply the sum of these narrative episodes, but that something else underlies and makes sense of its representational content. The world music gives us access to is not a mimetic representation of the natural world of creation, but the self-contained and self-referential world of the music itself. In a musical narrative, 'There is no fictional plot — just musical events'.³² As Walton observes, 'Music appears to have its own separate space, one unrelated to the listener's space'.³³

Music thus invites narrative interpretations, but turns our attempts to conceptualise it with reference to extra-musical ideas into an engagement with its own, non-conceptual world. Music's suggestion of narrative encourages an ecological or hermeneutical involvement, something highlighted by Michael Spitzer, who suggests that 'a fundamental effect of music is that the boundary between the tones and the listener

²⁹ Kendall Walton, 'Listening with Imagination', in *Music and Meaning*, ed. J. Robinson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 59, 67.

³⁰ Ibid. 67.

³¹ Ibid. 68.

³² Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*, 80.

³³ Walton, 'Listening with Imagination', 70.

seems to disappear, so that when I hear a melody rise “I feel as though I am rising, or imagine myself rising”.... “Musical worlds”, in Walton’s precise formulation, “will be radically indeterminate with respect to the identity and individuation of agents”.³⁴ In music we become personally involved in a world of experience that is uniquely musical, and not simply a representation of nature. Music is not a second-order representation of the natural world, but its own distinct event. As such, we can feel much more personally involved in the unfolding of musical worlds than in our engagement with other artistic spheres. Whereas we remain relatively detached in our engagement with literature, conscious of the distinction between the real world and its artistic representation, it is more difficult to locate ourselves with respect to musical events.³⁵

On a basic level, musical sounds have real-world analogues, which prompt us to react in particular ways. The sudden striking of a drum causes us to jump because we react with surprise to any loud, unexpected sound. More importantly, however, the unique character of musical worlds forces us to engage with the musical material directly, and not simply as a second-order representation of the natural world to which we are accustomed. There can be elements of sublimity within the narrative worlds of literature, either in Longinus’s rhetorical sense, or following a Kantian definition in which unexpected plot changes and incomprehensible events lead us to question the purposiveness of the literary world (and, in turn, of the natural world it represents). Even so, I would argue that such presentations of sublimity appear to us quite clearly as precisely this: a representation, rather than an actual experience. This understanding of representational art fits comfortably with Kant’s aesthetics: art is beautiful because it presents nature, including natural sublimity, in a way that emphasises its purposiveness. Consequently, our aesthetic reaction to sublimity depicted in a representational work is a judgement of accessory beauty, rather than an experience of the sublime.

With music, however, instances of sublimity are not representations of the sublime as it is experienced in the natural world, but are instead actual examples of the sublime, albeit functioning within the context of music’s unique artistic world. Because music is a human creation, its sublimity cannot be of the universal form found in nature, where the sublime remains incomprehensible because of the limitations of human cognition. Instead, it must rely on the attenuated form of temporal sublimity, in

³⁴ Michael Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 86, quoting Walton, ‘Listening with Imagination’.

³⁵ Drama can produce a similar level of personal involvement, but using different means: acts depicted on stage become real when we forget that they are representations of nature, and instead view them as events within the narrative of the real world.

which our ignorance of an object's purposiveness is due to its temporal incompleteness. When we hear the early recapitulation in the first movement of Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony, we do not immediately know how it can be made intelligible; it is only in the context of the following bars of music that it can be understood as purposive, and not simply mistaken. Temporal sublimity, as this example suggests, lacks the enduring character of the sublime in nature, but our immediate emotional reactions are the same. Unexpected musical events produce a negative emotional affect — *frisson* — which is subsequently interpreted as indicative of contrapurposiveness and thus leads to a positive aesthetic judgement.

Like all art, music is interpreted on two levels: as an object or event occurring within our lives in the 'real' world, and as generative of its own interpretive sphere. Viewed from without, music is clearly purposive, both in terms of its teleological goal — i.e. beauty — and its formal structure, which in many ways echoes the grammatical structures of language. Viewed from within, music, like the natural world, is full of experiences that challenge our expectations and seem — at least for a moment — to be irreducibly contrapurposive. Because musical worlds are not representations of nature, but generated by the formal structure of the music itself, when listening within the music we experience this contrapurposiveness as actual sublimity, rather than as simply a representation of the sublime in nature; in T. S. Eliot's words, 'You are the music while the music lasts'.³⁶ It is this difference, I argue, that accounts for our perception of music as free beauty. Whereas the presentation of the sublime in representative art leads to judgements of accessory beauty, the experience of sublimity within the context of music's artistic world prevents us from applying specific conceptual understandings of music's purpose to the purposiveness we observe from an external consideration of the musical object. Music is internally contrapurposive while externally intelligible, a combination that produces the perception of formal purposiveness characteristic of free beauty.

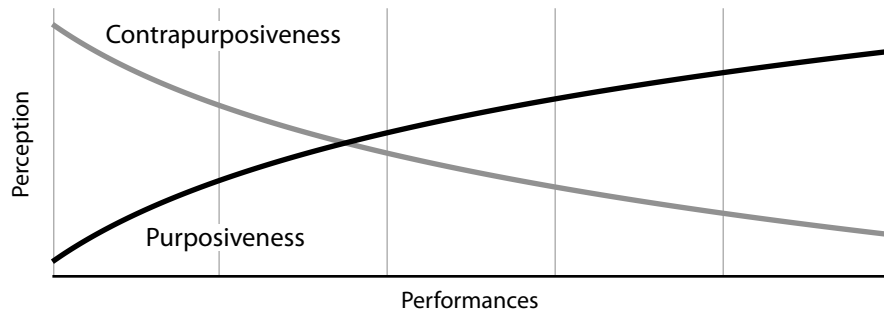
4. Perception of Musical Meaning

4.1. Interaction between Purposiveness and Contrapurposiveness

This conclusion has a number of intriguing implications. In the first place, it helps to explain the little-observed fact that we take the greatest pleasure not in music we have never heard before, as Meyer's information theory approach would suggest, but in music

³⁶ Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 30.

that is casually familiar. When we first listen to a new piece of music, it often seems alien and incoherent; in Kantian terms, we cannot perceive its purposiveness because we do not have knowledge of the entire, bounded object. Instead, we are aware only of the internal, contrapurposeful sublimity of its musical world. This, on its own, can be pleasurable, but it is a pleasure strongly coloured by our negative frisson response. In subsequent hearings, however, we are able to interpret this internal contrapurposefulness in light of our knowledge of the purposive whole, thus experiencing the music as free beauty rather than as the sublime. While the pleasure we gain from the music's sublimity alone decreases with repeated listenings — although, as Huron notes, not as quickly as one might imagine — our pleasure in the music's beauty actually increases with repetition, more than offsetting the diminution of our frisson response:



It is possible for our understanding of the music's objective purposiveness to reach a point of saturation, after which our experience of the music collapses into accessory beauty as it becomes impossible to perceive any internal contrapurposefulness. Even so, the contrary indications of external intelligibility and internal sublimity prevent this point from being reached even after a considerable number of repetitions.

Secondly, the idea that music is both externally purposive and internally sublime indicates a significant distinction between our aesthetic reactions to the musical object considered *in toto* and those we experience during musical performances. In the former case, music appears both purposive and purposeful, and thus functions as accessory beauty. When analysing an entire musical work, we can identify the formal considerations that shaped those features which might, during a performance, seem surprising: the early '*Eroica*' recapitulation is understood, when the movement is analysed as a whole, as an anticipatory intensification of the larger sonata structure. Thanks to Lerdahl and Jackendoff, we can offer a comprehensive grammatical interpretation of any musical structure within the classical tradition, explaining departures from our expectations as reflections of in-built preference rules, and not as radical instances of sublimity.

In performance, however, this musical grammar is no longer sufficient to prepare us for, or even to immediately parse, the constant challenges to our musical expectations. Instead, it acts as a basis of intelligibility that leads us to expect coherence even when our predictions prove incorrect. Diana Raffman documents how music's formal structure, which allows us to analyse it as an accessory form of beauty when viewed as a totality, performs this more deceptive role during musical performance. Quoting Susanne Langer, she acknowledges the defining effect of language on our understanding of human activity, noting that 'we are so deeply impressed with the paragon of symbolic form, namely language, that we naturally carry its characteristics over into our conceptions and expectations of any other mode'.³⁷ Raffman argues that a linguistic understanding of music is appropriate, given its possession of something akin to grammatical structure, but that 'the presence of grammatical structure in music... (mis)leads us to expect something similarly effable' from musical meaning'.³⁸ Instead of the conceptual meaning we discern through grammatical parsing of language, 'What we "follow" a piece to, the results of grammatical processing, are the ineffable feelings that constitute our conscious musical knowledge or understanding'.³⁹

These 'ineffable feelings', I have suggested, are more often than not involved in an aesthetic perception of musical form as sublime. It is this internal sublimity, coupled with the apparent purposiveness of music's grammatical form, that allows music in performance to be perceived as free beauty. Music affords both interpretations of objective purposiveness, characteristic of judgements of beauty, as well as the projection of purposive totalities as a means of explaining the musical sublime. When listening to music we can perceive its intelligibility even as we are led to project comprehensive understandings that make sense of apparently contrapurposive events. Music, as we saw previously, is objectively purposive because of its formal structure; it is nevertheless perceived as purposeless because of its internal sublimity, which subverts our attempts to predict its movement and thus resists the imposition of conceptual understandings of purpose. As Daniel Chua evocatively writes, 'The sublime smashes the limits of musical coherence, leaving the empty trace of the infinite in its trail... The

³⁷ Diana Raffman, *Language, Music, and Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 40–1, quoting Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Scribner, 1953), 28–9.

³⁸ Raffman, *Language, Music, and Mind*, 41.

³⁹ Ibid. Of course, not all meaning conveyed by language is conceptual — e.g., metaphors that subtly alter the underlying meaning of the words they compare — but language, as a cognitive commentary on our intuitions of the world, does largely convey meaning through concepts.

constant draining out of significance is therefore the movement of the sublime in instrumental music; it is this that conjures up the “unknown realm of the infinite”.⁴⁰

4.2 Implications for Understanding Music’s Theological Significance

This comment highlights the significance of the sublime for discussions of music-theology, particularly the way in which its unboundedness leads to the consideration of the ‘unknown realm of the infinite’. Chua argues that, in attempting to become sublime, instrumental music usurped God’s prerogative to create contrapurposive objects. One of the central challenges of Kant’s aesthetics is the assertion that human art cannot ultimately rise to the level of natural beauty because it is inherently comprehensible. While the idea of genius allows for manmade beauty, it is a beauty achieved by relinquishing human cognition to the purposiveness of nature. Through genius the artistic individual is reduced to insignificance, becoming a tool through which the beauty of nature is expressed. Human art is only beautiful insofar as it is *not* human, but natural. The sublimity of music, however, represents a direct challenge to this system: human intelligence is applied to create an object that subverts conceptual meaning; a prism that traps all light and thus obviates any trace of purpose. Music defies the biblical prohibition on graven images; it

is something that is *made*, even if it conceals itself under the reiterations of ‘Thou shalt not make’. By aligning the empty sign with the unnameable name, music transgresses by not breaking the command, for it represents negation as the image of the divine. This is the sophisticated idolatry of Romanticism, which works by positing a deity that it never names. It was a kind of aesthetic demythologisation designed to replace seemingly naïve beliefs in a real, creator God.⁴¹

While Chua is right to identify an idolatrous element in Romantic treatments of music, the historical association of the musical sublime with nineteenth-century idolatry does not indicate that sublimity in music necessarily poses a challenge to divine authority. On a basic level, because musical works *are* ultimately bounded they can only appear sublime as they unfold, not when considered as a whole. Whereas the sublime in nature remains impregnable to our comprehension, music may frustrate our expectations as we listen but any contrapurposiveness is eventually revealed as purposive. The presence of the sublime in music should not lead to theological defiance, but instead reflects the fact

⁴⁰ Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 179.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

that we perceive music in a way that draws on our experiences of nature. We are able to appreciate sublimity within music's artistic world because we have experienced it, and its consequences for our lives, in the natural world. It is not that musical sublimity *represents* the sublime in nature — I have argued that, following Kant's aesthetics, music is perceived as sublime *directly* — but that our experience of sublimity in music, limited to music's artistic world, is experientially *subsequent* to the sublime in nature. Musical worlds exist within our experience of the natural world, and apply the means by which we perceive nature to human creations. We perceive purposiveness, not so that we can experience artistic beauty, but so that we can form understandings of the natural world that are consistent with our cognition; in particular, so that we may have confidence in the correspondence between our cognition of phenomena and noumenal objects. Natural beauty is the first-order experience of this confidence; human art applies our aesthetic judgement, intended to support our cognition of nature, to the consideration of objects created to evoke a similar sense of formal purposiveness, either through imitation of nature, or through formal structures that create a similar cognitive state, albeit in a limited artistic world.

5. Summary

Over the course of these last two chapters, I have argued that musical beauty is of this second, non-representational type. Although music is capable of limited forms of representation, particularly the representation of emotions and specific linguistic structures, a representational approach is insufficient to provide a comprehensive explanation of musical beauty. Indeed, music seems particularly capable of holding together the paradoxical requirements of free beauty: that it appear formally purposive, but without a single, comprehensive, identifiable purpose. By virtue of both its physical (acoustic) properties and cultural contextualisation, music follows formal rules that provide a basis for its intelligibility and shape its structure. Unlike linguistic grammar, however, musical grammar does not define the bounds of intelligibility, but instead serves as a point from which the music is able to literally transcend such formal expectations. The musical object thus appears purposive, yet its unique structure — particularly its sanction of formal improvisation — provides the objective affordances that allow us to perceive music in performance as free beauty.

From a subjective perspective, music's lack of representational content results in the perception of musical worlds that seem to exist independently of nature, rather than as an image of it. We are led, in Chua's words, into the 'unknown realm of the

infinite'; into a world that is distinct from nature, and is thus perceived as another nature, in which we can have genuine experiences of the sublime. Even so, although on the one hand we listen within the music's artistic world, and thus experience the contrapurposiveness of musical sublimity, on the other we recognise the purposiveness of a human creation that exists within nature. Music's internal sublimity drains it of conceptual meaning, yet its external purposiveness means that we nevertheless view its lack of purpose as intelligible, and thus as an example of free beauty rather than the sublime. Musical beauty is both independent of nature, in the sense that it does not rely on the representation of natural beauty for its aesthetic effect, and also requires the context provided by the natural world. We judge music to be sublime within its own musical world based on the philosophical understanding of sublimity formulated from our experiences of the sublime in nature. Moreover, music appears beautiful and not merely sublime because it occurs within the context provided by the natural world; if we could not view music from 'without', i.e., as an object within nature as well as its own artistic world, we could not perceive musical sublimity as purposive. Musical beauty is thus subsequent to the beauty of nature, but not directly dependent on it; our perception of musical beauty is irreducibly coloured by both its existence within nature, and our prior experiences of nature's formal purposiveness. It is also particularly intertwined, on an epistemological level, with Kant's metaphysical common sense, as both an example of sublimity and a free beauty.

This conclusion has important implications for our understanding of musical beauty and its theological significance. Music's entanglement with ideas beyond the bounds of Kant's subjective epistemology allows us to link our perception of musical beauty with theological knowledge while preserving the claim that knowledge is constructed by the human mind. But although aesthetic judgements may be dependent on a metaphysical principle that plays a particularly important role in our perception of musical beauty, we cannot, within a subjective epistemological system, demonstrate that this common sense is *in fact* related to knowledge of God, thus functioning as an epistemological locus for music's theological significance. We can, however, assess whether a theological interpretation of musical beauty and its dependence on the *sensus communis* is consistent with our experience by comparing aesthetic judgements to the psychological features of religious experience, and it is this task that will occupy our discussion in the following chapter.

4

Aesthetics and Religion

1. Introduction

1.1. Summary of Previous Conclusions

Our motivation throughout this thesis has been to give an account of music's apparent theological significance from an epistemological perspective, seeking to determine whether our experiences of music can be understood as dependent on theological knowledge given the subjective orientation of contemporary epistemological thought. Immanuel Kant's aesthetics, I argued, can provide a critical lens through which to consider the relationship between aesthetic judgements of music and theological knowledge, since Kant is particularly insistent and incisive in his attempt to base knowledge in our individual human minds. In the first chapter, we discovered that although Kant is keen to preserve the radical independence of human thought from external determination, in the matter of aesthetic judgement he is forced to posit a metaphysical common sense — which plays a constitutive role in determinations of beauty — to establish the universality of our aesthetic judgements.

Using Kant's aesthetics to analyse the unique nature of musical beauty, we saw that music is able to both appear purposive, i.e., intelligible, and also resist specific conceptual meanings, despite being a human creation and thus inherently — it would seem — comprehensible. Music creates its own 'musical world' in which formal structures are used to subvert our expectations of meaning. Within this musical world we experience aesthetic sublimity, in which something apparently unintelligible is nevertheless perceived as being an intelligible part of a larger, purposive structure, directly. Because musical worlds occur within nature, however, we can also, from the outside, ap-

preciate the fact that music does reflect specific purposes, and is fundamentally intelligible. This combination of internal sublimity and external comprehension, I argued, produces precisely the state of purposiveness without a purpose that characterises the free beauty of nature.

Crucially, music's status as a free beauty, which distinguishes it from other, representational forms of art, closely associates our perception of music with Kant's metaphysical common sense. Rather than appearing beautiful in a second-order sense, by participating in the beauty of nature, our perception of musical beauty is unmediated. Moreover, the fact that within its artistic world music is actually sublime means that our judgements of musical beauty do not simply reflect the intelligibility of the musical object, but represent judgements of the sublime based directly on the *sensus communis*. Music is thus particularly involved in the dependence of aesthetic judgements on this metaphysical common sense, an observation that accounts, on an epistemological level, for its inherent sense of transcendence. Music seems to surpass the boundaries of our understanding — in Jankélévitch's terms, being both meaningful and meaningless — because in the act of musical perception we must depend extensively on metaphysical knowledge, which is, by definition, beyond our epistemological capacity.¹

1.2. Chapter Outline

In the following chapter we will consider how Kant's *sensus communis* can be understood, from a Christian perspective, as representing the dependence of musical beauty on knowledge of God. First, however, we must consider whether a theological interpretation of Kant's common sense is justified by our experience of musical beauty and aesthetic judgements. Is our experience of aesthetic judgements amenable to theological reflection? While anecdotal evidence for an association between music and theology was given in the introduction, it will be helpful to approach this question in a more theoretical and systematic way. Because the *sensus communis* is a metaphysical principle, we have no way, within a subjective epistemology, of judging between different potential interpretations. Even so, our experience of aesthetic judgements can suggest types of approaches that would seem most plausible. In this chapter we will consider the features of aesthetic judgement — particularly its non-conceptuality, subjectivity, and universality — in relation to psychological and neurological studies of religious experience. While a correspondence between psychological theories of religious experience and the characteristics of aesthetic judgements would not demon-

¹ Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. C. Abbate (Princeton University Press, 2003), 11.

strate that aesthetics *is* theological, it would support our intention to interpret Kant's *sensus communis* in theological terms.

To some extent, the argument of this chapter is circular. Kant's aesthetics, as I will show, plays an integral role in the development of the concept of religious experience. Knowledge of God may lie beyond the bounds of a human-mind-dependent epistemology, but specific experiences with religious import remain accessible to human cognition; we may not have access to theological knowledge, but we can still study the outward, experiential features of religions and religious experience. Kant identifies religiosity with moral reason, but this interpretation is quickly superseded by Friedrich Schleiermacher's contention that religious feeling be associated with aesthetic judgement. Both aesthetic judgements and religious feelings are non-conceptual, universal, and implicitly transcendent. This relationship between religion and beauty is particularly strong, Schleiermacher suggests, in musical beauty, which he at one point argues has more theological worth than religious doctrine. With William James and Rudolf Otto the connection between aesthetics and religion is less pronounced, but can still be discerned in the psychological characteristics of religion each propose, as well as in neurological studies of religious experience.

Although Schleiermacher's identification of religious feeling with aesthetic experience has coloured subsequent understandings of religious experience, the fact that religion and aesthetics can be so easily related does help to justify the consideration of Kant's metaphysical common sense from a theological perspective. Moreover, it suggests that the epistemological dependence of our aesthetic judgements on metaphysical knowledge could provide an explanation, at least in part, for the correspondence between aesthetics and religion, at least within the context of Western thought and society. Because of the developmental connection between Kantian aesthetics and psychological understandings of religious experience, we will consider the relationship between these two historically, beginning with a discussion of Kant before turning to Schleiermacher, James, Otto, and modern neurological research in turn.

2. Philosophical Understandings of Religion

2.1. Kant: God and the Highest Good

As we have seen, Kant's philosophy is shaped by his decision to consider objects as subject to our minds, rather than the other way around: our minds do not passively perceive the world, but actively create it. By placing the starting point for philosophi-

cal reflection within our own minds, Kant is able to provide a robust foundation for philosophical premises. We do not need to worry about whether our philosophical ideas of causation are contingent on the independent existence of space and time, for example, because both space and time are created by our cognition; we can thus know that they exist by examining our own minds, without having to trust in the accuracy of perception, consistency of nature, or providence of God.² In exchange for this philosophical independence, Kant's subjective approach limits our conceptual knowledge to objects of our comprehension. We can have knowledge of objects outside our minds only through our perception of them; we cannot know things in themselves. Likewise, we cannot have conceptual knowledge of God because 'all synthetic principles of understanding are of immanent use only; but cognition of a supreme being requires a transcendental use of these principles, a use for which our understanding is not at all equipped'.³ Because we can only know about objects outside our minds insofar as they relate to us — i.e. through perception — even if we have a direct experience of God we cannot, on the basis of that experience, know conceptually that our experience is of a supreme being. As Kant puts it, 'Experience never offers us the greatest of all possible effects'; i.e., there is always an explanation for an object of perception that falls short of requiring a necessary being.⁴

Consequently, 'The principles of reason's natural use lead to no theology whatsoever'; theology cannot be derived from theoretical reason because God cannot be conceptualised.⁵ Yet in addition to theoretical reason, Kant identifies two other cognitive faculties: practical (moral) reason and the power of judgement; the latter, when not related to either theory or morality, also makes aesthetic determinations. Because religious ideas have no place in theoretical reason, Kant identifies religion with moral activity and practical reason. The goal of morality is the Scholastic concept of the 'highest good', which 'consists in the combination of universal happiness... with the supreme condition of their being good, namely, that they be moral in maximal conformity with the law'.⁶ Goodness is not simply an arbitrary duty to fulfil moral requirements; instead, moral action must have a purpose, viz., universal happiness. Kant

² Immanuel Kant, *Inaugural Dissertation*, trans. W. J. Eckoff (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2007), 2:403, quoted in Christopher J. Insole, 'Kant's Transcendental Idealism, Freedom and the Divine Mind', Unpublished Manuscript (2008), 8.

³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), A636/A664.

⁴ Ibid., A637/B665.

⁵ Ibid., A636/A664.

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 453.

argues that we can determine our moral obligations by applying the categorical imperative — ‘Act in such a way that the maxim of your will [could] always hold at the same time as a principle laying down universal law’ — thus satisfying the second condition of the highest good without reference to God.⁷ Universal happiness, however, is not within our power to command because it ‘depends on how nature is constituted (i.e., on whether or not nature harmonises with that final purpose)’.⁸ The highest good is only possible if nature itself is oriented towards the goal of universal happiness, which requires that it have a moral author.⁹

This is not, however, a theoretical argument for the existence of God because it proceeds from our moral actions in the world rather than from concepts within our minds. The concepts of practical reason are demonstrated through practical application, not logical reasoning. Frederick Beiser gives a helpful summary of this process:

Concepts that cannot be demonstrated through theoretical reason can be demonstrated through practical reason when it makes them goals for action and realises them in practice.

Hence Kant states that the transcendent use of reason becomes immanent when reason becomes ‘in the field of experience an efficient cause through ideas’.¹⁰

Knowledge of God, though impossible through theoretical reason, can be achieved in moral activity. This is a very limited knowledge, however, because practical reason ‘has the right to command beliefs only if they are necessary for action according to moral principles’.¹¹ Because the only belief necessary for moral action is that the universe has a moral author, neither theoretical nor practical reason can accommodate specific theological concepts. Instead, moral action is paired with a basic form of religious faith, creating a general notion of religiosity that is focused around practice.

2.2. Schleiermacher: Religion as ‘Feeling of Absolute Dependence’

Kant de-couples religious practices from theological concepts, aligning the former with our moral obligations and the practical use of reason. While practical reason provides a place for the concept of God within Kant’s philosophical system, it is less

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 5:30.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ For a discussion of how Kant relates faith with practical reason, see Christopher J. Insole, ‘The Irreducible Importance of Religious Hope in Kant’s Conception of the Highest Good’, *Philosophy* 83 (2008); Frederick C. Beiser, ‘Moral Faith and the Highest Good’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, ed. P. Guyer (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:48; Beiser, ‘Moral faith and the highest good’, 612.

¹¹ Ibid., 611.

accommodating of the contemplative elements of religious faith, particularly since only those concepts necessary for moral action can be demonstrated. With the rise of the Romantic movement, philosophers began exploring whether a similar principle, providing a location for the theological as experienced, might operate in relation to aesthetic judgement. Could religion be established on the basis of feelings which seem to require a transcendent source? This is the possibility behind Friedrich Schleiermacher's (1768–1834) series of speeches *On Religion* for its 'cultured despisers': i.e., those who can see no place for religion within modern thought. Schleiermacher agrees with Kant that religion is not able to 'determine and explain the universe according to its nature as does metaphysics', but disputes his equation of religion with morality. While a concept of God may be necessary for moral action, morality is not the primary characteristic of religion as it is experienced. The fundamental task of religious devotion is not 'to continue the universe's development and perfect it by the power of freedom and the divine free choice of a human being as does morals', although this may follow from religious faith. Instead, 'Religion's essence is neither thinking or nor acting, but intuition and feeling'.¹²

These three possible essences — thinking, acting, and feeling — map directly onto Kant's division of cognition into theoretical reason, practical reason, and aesthetic judgement. Schleiermacher associates religion with aesthetic reflection, which, as we have seen, is inherently non-conceptual and subjective. It is an emphasis on transcendence that differentiates religious reflection from other aesthetic judgements: religion 'apprehends man beyond the play of his particular powers and his personality, and views him from the vantage point where he must be as he is'.¹³ Religion is thus an awareness of one's personal limitations in the context of the infinite universe.

Because religion involves a non-conceptual intuition of infinity, Schleiermacher develops a pluralistic attitude towards particular religions. 'Each person must be conscious that his religion is only a part of the whole, that regarding the same objects that affect him religiously there are views just as pious and, nevertheless, completely different from his own'.¹⁴ 'Religion' becomes a general category describing the transcendent experience underlying all specific instances of religious doctrine and belief. Theological propositions are not only secondary to the experiential essence of religion, but as a

¹² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultural Despisers*, trans. R. Crouter (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2:22.

¹³ Ibid., 2:23.

¹⁴ Ibid., 2:27.

consequence also inherently subjective: 'There exists a qualitative difference between the propositions and the experience'.¹⁵ This distinction forms an important part of Schleiermacher's defence of religion against its cultured despisers; as he asks, 'What is it in religion over which men have argued, taken sides, and ignited wars? Sometimes over morals and always over metaphysics, and neither of these belongs to it'.¹⁶

While Schleiermacher is the first to suggest that 'religion' might be used to describe experiences stemming from a common religious impulse, his theory is not entirely descriptive but contains implicit theological assumptions. These are more easily identified in his later work, *The Christian Faith*, where our experience of transcendence is described in relation to human freedom as a feeling of 'absolute dependence'. One of the most basic elements of transcendental idealism is the intuitive experience of freedom; it is this conviction that human actions are free that leads Kant to make objects subject to our cognitive determination. Coupled with our intuition of freedom, however, is an intuition of purposiveness or causality that makes it possible for us to understand the world and categorise our sensory intuitions into concepts; freedom is opposed by determination. While we experience freedom in our own actions, Schleiermacher argues that by definition our intuition of determination cannot be self-generated, so that 'in every self-consciousness there are two elements, which we might call respectively a self-caused element and a non-self-caused element'.¹⁷

In our experiences of nature, both of these elements — freedom and dependence — are always active, so that even in cases that would seem to be pure expressions of freedom or of dependence the other element is also present. There is no such a thing as absolute freedom because 'in every such case there is involved a feeling of dependence which goes along with the feeling of freedom and thus limits it'.¹⁸ Absolute dependence, however, is not only possible but is present at the very heart of existence; it is 'the consciousness that the whole of our spontaneous activity comes from a source outside of us in just the same sense in which anything towards which we should have a feeling of absolute freedom must have proceeded entirely from ourselves'.¹⁹ Because this absolute dependence cannot be derived from nature, where dependence is always accompanied by freedom, it must be from God. Schleiermacher creates the rudiments

¹⁵ Stephen Sykes, *Friedrich Schleiermacher* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1971), 21.

¹⁶ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 2:28.

¹⁷ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (T&T Clark, 1999), §4.1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, §4.3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

of a positive theology from a Kantian reformulation of the cosmological argument, placing our experience of dependence at the heart of piety and thus theology. As he writes, 'This feeling of absolute dependence, in which our self-consciousness in general represents the finitude of our being is... a universal element of life; and the recognition of this fact entirely takes the place for the system of doctrine, of all the so-called proofs of the existence of God'.²⁰

This proof is not entirely successful, making the error of overstating what can be known from experience. Simply because we have a feeling of absolute dependence we cannot know, through induction in a human-mind-dependent epistemology, that we are *in fact* absolutely dependent. It nevertheless highlights a number of key features common to experiences of religion across theological perspectives. For Schleiermacher, religious faith is based on a non-conceptual conviction that we exist in relation to something not only all-encompassing, but truly infinite. Religion is 'infinite in all respects, an infinity of matter and form, of being, or vision, and of knowledge about it'.²¹ Although we can never comprehend such an infinity, we can experience it at the limits of our own subjective existence. Religion can be understood as a particular class of aesthetic judgements, in which we become aware of the transcendent foundations of such judgements, or as a distinct awareness of this transcendence that is nevertheless closely related to aesthetics insofar as it provides its transcendent source.

2.3. Schleiermacher and Art-Religion

In Schleiermacher we see one of the first attempts to consider the subjective character of religious experience independently of theological knowledge. It is thus particularly interesting to observe the strength of the connection he believes exists between religious and aesthetic experience. Although he does not identify the metaphysical *sensus communis* as the philosophical cause of aesthetic judgement's religious import, he nevertheless intuitively relates aesthetic judgement to a sense of dependence on that which is greater than our individual subjectivity. Beauty and religion are both dependent on the same metaphysical source; beautiful objects are thus directly associated with religious sensibility. Schleiermacher argues that an 'inner affinity' exists between art and religion, leading him to remark that

Indeed, if it is true that there are quick conversions, occasions by which, for someone who thought of nothing less than rising about the finite, the sense of the universe opens up, in a

²⁰ Ibid., §33.

²¹ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 2:27.

movement as if through an immediate inner illumination, and surprises a person with its splendour, then I believe that more than anything else the sight of great and sublime works of art can achieve this miracle.²²

Schleiermacher's most extended treatment of the specific relationship between religion and music appears in *Christmas Eve*, a small, fictional work inspired by a flute recital given by the blind flautist Friedrich Dülon, whom Schleiermacher heard in December of 1805.²³ Music features prominently throughout the work, which centres around a discussion of the significance of the Incarnation, as the child-like faith of the daughter Sofie, often expressed through music, is compared favourably with the doctrinal arguments of other characters. As her father, Eduard, remarks, 'Every fine *Gefühl* [feeling or self-consciousness] comes completely to the fore only when we have found the right musical expression for it. Not the spoken word, for this can never be anything but indirect... but a real, uncluttered tone. And it is precisely to religious *Gefühl* that music is most closely related'.²⁴ Schleiermacher highlights the ineffability of music in comparison with speech, suggesting that music's ability to convey aesthetic feelings without concepts contributes to its close association with religion. More than simply allowing for religious interpretation, however, music in *Christmas Eve* functions as a vehicle for the feeling of self-consciousness or absolute dependence that forms the basis of religion.

There has been considerable debate over whether Schleiermacher's aesthetic approach to religion actually makes a religion out of art.²⁵ His comments in *On Religion* seem to argue against this interpretation, since he professes to have 'never heard anything about a religion of art', and argues that the inner affinity between art and religion 'is nevertheless still unknown to them'.²⁶ The treatment of music in *Christmas Eve*, however, does appear to blur the distinction between art and religion to the point of insignificance. This is the conclusion Karl Barth draws from the work: that for Schleiermacher, 'Exactly because of its lack of concepts, music is the true and legitimate bearer of the message of Christmas, the adequate expression for the highest and

²² Ibid., 3:69, 68.

²³ Philip Stoltzfus, *Theology As Performance* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 54.

²⁴ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve: Dialogue on Incarnation*, trans. T. N. Tice (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1967), quoted in Stoltzfus, *Theology As Performance*, 83.

²⁵ See e.g. Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. R. Lustig (University of Chicago Press, 1989), 85–7; Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (London: SPCK, 2007), 147–52; Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, n.17; René Wellek, *The Romantic Age, A History of Modern Criticism*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 304.

²⁶ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 69.

final dialectical level'.²⁷ Barth's criticism highlights the continuing relationship between religious feeling and Christian theology in Schleiermacher's thought: music performs a particular theological function by bearing the specific message of *Christ-mas*. Such implicit references to theological claims pervade Schleiermacher's thought; despite the fact that he believes we can identify a feeling of absolute dependence through subjective philosophical reflection alone, his understanding of religion remains theological. Most significantly, he continues to believe that our religious feelings do point towards a transcendent object, as his attempt to prove God's existence demonstrates. We do not simply *feel* absolutely dependent, but *are*.

This theological dependence is not necessarily a problem, since Schleiermacher acknowledges his intention to be a Christian theologian, and from a Christian perspective we *are* absolutely dependent on our creator. His implicit reliance on Christian theology, however, calls into question whether we would still identify 'absolute dependence' as the fundamental characteristic of religious experience in a theologically neutral context. Barth's point is precisely this: that it is useless for Schleiermacher to attempt to derive theology from religious experience, since his conception of the latter is irreducibly constituted by the former. If there is a basic religious feeling, by calling it 'absolute dependence' we give it theological significance, and thus do not define religious experience in a way that avoids theological commitments.

What Schleiermacher's focus on religious feeling does importantly suggest, however, is a fundamental connection between religious experience and aesthetics. He stops short of equating art and religion but nevertheless emphasises their shared non-conceptuality, association with feelings and emotions, and the fact that both art and religion seem to point beyond themselves towards a transcendent source. In so doing, Schleiermacher uses Kant's definition of beauty as non-conceptual, subjective, and universal, to define not only aesthetics but also religion. Other Romantic philosophers similarly recognised the transcendent potential of aesthetic judgement — Friedrich Schelling, for example, speaks of aesthetics as a way of gaining objective access to the Absolute — but Schleiermacher emphasises the similarities between our *experiences* of art and religion, rather than simply identifying philosophical parallels.²⁸ Not only are there philosophical correspondences between aesthetics and religion — notably the transcendent independence of cognitive play — but we actually experience both in

²⁷ Karl Barth, *Theology and Church*, trans. L. P. Smith (London: SCM Press, 1962), 157, quoted in Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 148.

²⁸ Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 74.

similar ways. Schleiermacher's theological attempts to describe our experience of religion link Kant's idea of beauty with religious experience, a connection that many later writers who eschew such metaphysical commitments nevertheless preserve in their own theories of religious experience.

3. Psychological Theories of Religious Experience

2.1. William James: Relating Experience to the Transcendent

One such theorist is William James, whose seminal Gifford Lectures on the psychology of religious experience were published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in 1902. James's work is particularly important for understanding how religious experience relates to cognition because it represents one of the earliest studies of religious belief from the perspective of cognitive psychology. A key feature of James's work is the assertion that there is no such thing as a unique 'religious sentiment'; an idea that echoes Schleiermacher's decision to place religion among our cognitive faculties, rather than distinguishing an additional 'religious' faculty. For James, 'religious' signifies the object towards which particular emotions are directed. 'There is religious fear, religious love, religious awe, religious joy, and so forth. But religious love is only man's natural emotion of love directed to a religious object'.²⁹ *Religion* thus becomes 'the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine'.³⁰

Like Schleiermacher's definition of religion as a feeling of absolute dependence, James's attempt is in many ways conditioned by a Western — and thus historically Christian — context, particularly his focus on 'individual men in their solitude' instead of the social aspects of religion. Unlike Schleiermacher, however, James's definition is entirely descriptive, so that while the features of religion he selects may reflect his context, he makes no judgement as to whether they do in fact 'stand in relationship to something divine'. Seth Kunin comments on the subjectivity of James's approach, observing that 'the experience he describes is grounded in the self, and the externalisation of the self, and does not rely on a transcendent other'.³¹ For James, an experience becomes religious when it is perceived in relation to the divine; objects and emotions are not religious per se, but are given religious significance through our interpretation. Religion is thus primarily located within our minds and involves a par-

²⁹ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2004), 36.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

³¹ Seth D. Kunin, *Religion: The Modern Theories* (Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 101.

ticular mode of perceiving the world. This distinction reflects Schleiermacher's view that religious experience involves a consciousness of the transcendent aspects of aesthetic judgement. For Schleiermacher, although aesthetics and religion are not equivalent the former is inherently open to religious interpretation and thus can facilitate religious experience. James's theory of religion offers a similar possibility of understanding aesthetics as religious through its orientation towards a metaphysical common sense.

Again following Schleiermacher, James agrees that 'feeling is the deeper source of religion, and that philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products, like translations of a text into another tongue'.³² Mystical experiences in particular emphasise the limitations of language and point towards the importance of non-conceptual expressions like music for communicating religious content. The frequency with which self-contradictory phrases occur in mystical writings 'prove[s] that not conceptual speech, but music rather, is the element through which we are best spoken to by mystical truth.... Music gives us ontological messages which non-musical criticism is unable to contradict, though it may laugh at our foolishness in minding them'.³³ Although theologies and philosophies are important insofar as they help make conceptual sense of our experiences, religion is fundamentally a matter of feeling and thus non-conceptual.

In his final lecture, James summarises the 'characteristics of the religious life' and identifies three foundational beliefs typical of a religious outlook:

1. That the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance;
2. That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end;
3. That prayer or inner communion with the spirit thereof... is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world.³⁴

In keeping with his view that religion involves the perception of objects in relationship to the divine, these beliefs assert that such a relationship does exist, and that it is oriented in a particular direction: this world is dependent on and points towards a transcendent realm. The first belief is a cognitive statement of this fact, while the sec-

³² James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 372–3.

³³ *Ibid.*, 364.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 418.

and indicates an awareness of its ethical implications. Considered against Kant's tripartite division of cognition, these two beliefs describe the relationship between faith, which is fundamentally a matter of feeling or aesthetics, and the other two cognitive faculties of theoretical and practical reason. If an aesthetic religious feeling is basic, as both Schleiermacher and James suggest, then these beliefs are not so much the conditions of faith as the theoretical and moral consequences of religious experience.

James's third fundamental belief is somewhat redundant: if there is a connection between the visible world and a more spiritual universe, we would expect interaction between these two worlds to occur, particularly since their union is 'our true end'. Along with the second belief, however, what it emphasises is the personal relevance of religious beliefs, and the importance of individual commitment. Religious beliefs are not simply propositions to which we give our intellectual assent, but truths that shape our actions and the world around us, requiring commitment and devotion. Personal involvement plays an important role in religion because of the nature of religious experiences, which are fundamentally non-conceptual and subjective, yet appear to possess universal significance. James notes that mystical experiences are 'absolutely authoritative over individuals to whom they come', yet 'no authority emanates from them which should make it a duty for those who stand outside of them to accept their revelations uncritically'.³⁵ In saying that religious beliefs have no authority for others, James is making a descriptive observation, since it is the nature of religious beliefs, like judgements of beauty, to claim universal significance. Again, as with beauty, these claims to universality cannot be disproved, because they appeal to a standard beyond the purview of reason: '[Rational] denials have no strength, for there never can be a state of facts to which new meaning may not truthfully be added, provided the mind ascend to a more enveloping point of view'.³⁶

Religious experiences involve viewing objects or experiences in relation to a higher world, understanding this connection with a transcendent reality through feeling and without concepts. Religious insights are intended to have universal validity, but their non-conceptuality makes their content difficult to communicate and immune to rational objection. They also require a level of personal commitment; mere recognition of an object's transcendent possibilities would not qualify as a religious experience unless accompanied by a feeling that this fact had personal significance. Objects can

³⁵ Ibid., 366.

³⁶ Ibid., 370.

facilitate religion — e.g., the non-conceptuality of music can provide a vehicle for religious content — but religious experiences ultimately depend on an individual's subjective interpretation, viz., considering the object in relation to the divine. As with Schleiermacher, religion is identified with a non-conceptual awareness of transcendence, and thus aligned in a Kantian framework with both aesthetics and judgement.

3.2. Rudolf Otto: Religion as 'Wholly Other'

Unlike James and Schleiermacher, who both view religion as fundamentally consistent with our normal cognitive faculties, Rudolf Otto suggests that an additional faculty capable of perceiving 'holiness' is necessary to fully describe religious experience. In *The Idea of the Holy*, Otto argues for a 'unique "numinous" category of value and... a definitely "numinous" state of mind' alongside theoretical and practical reason, and judgement.³⁷ A sense of the numinous implies an awareness of holiness 'above and beyond the meaning of goodness'; religious experiences have, as their common element, a feeling of holiness that induces both awe — the '*mysterium tremendum*' — and fascination.³⁸ Because we possess a faculty for perceiving the numinous we are able to identify instances of holiness in the world: objects that through their differentiation from the world point us towards a higher realm. Whereas James argues that any object or experience can become religious if thought about in relation to the divine — highlighting the continuity of religion with ordinary experience — Otto's emphasis on holiness and a separate numinous faculty stresses the discontinuity of religious experiences.

In identifying awe and fascination as the two key characteristics of religious experiences, Otto is not in fact that far removed from James. Both fascination and awe are not only intrinsically emotional but also non-conceptual. Quoting James, Otto presents the case of a person describing their mystical religious experience:

For the moment nothing but an ineffable joy and exaltation remained. It is impossible fully to describe the experience. It was like the effect of some great orchestra, when all the separate notes have melted into one swelling harmony, that leaves the listener conscious of nothing save that his soul is being wafted upwards and almost bursting with its own emotion.³⁹

The analogy drawn between music, itself ineffable, and the religious experience, is only partially able to convey its intense emotionality. Otto's 'fascination' describes both James's criteria of personal involvement and Schleiermacher's claim that religion is

³⁷ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. J. W. Harbey (Oxford University Press, 1958), 7.

³⁸ Ibid., 6.

³⁹ Ibid., 37.

primarily a matter of non-conceptual feeling. 'Awe' provides the cognitive aspect found in James's first two fundamental beliefs, as it involves the recognition that we exist in relation to something else greater than ourselves. Otto describes this as the 'wholly other', and argues that our differentiation from this source leads to a basic 'consciousness of creaturehood'.⁴⁰

In contrast to James's description of religious experience, however, Otto identifies the divine with that which is 'wholly other' rather than simply with the 'beyond' or transcendent. Whereas James's approach implies continuity with the world, Otto insists that we are aware of holiness precisely because of its radical incommensurability. 'These terms "supernatural" and "transcendent" give the appearance of positive attributes, and, as applied to the mysterious, they appear to divest the *mysterium* of its originally negative meaning and turn it into an affirmation'.⁴¹ Because holiness is fundamentally other and therefore ultimately inaccessible to reason, morality, or emotion, we can only become aware of its presence through metaphor or *via negativa*. But what would even prompt us to look for something so radically different? By positing the numinous as its own cognitive faculty, Otto argues that a search for the wholly other is an intrinsic part of our cognition.

Otto's conception of the divine as 'wholly other' dramatically limits the ways in which objects can facilitate religious experiences. 'In neither the sublime nor the magical, effective as they are, has art more than an indirect means of representing the numinous. Of directer [sic] methods our Western art has only two, and they are in a noteworthy way *negative*, viz. *darkness* and *silence*'.⁴² In James's view, religion is a particular type of aesthetic judgement, related to a religious object. By positing an entirely separate cognitive faculty for the perception of the numinous, Otto removes this connection, separating religion from our perception of the world and relegating it to a distinct psychological domain.

Otto's argument is ultimately circular: we can only recognise the wholly other if we possess a numinous faculty; we recognise the wholly other, therefore we must possess a numinous faculty. Circularity is not always a problem, but in this case the premises do not seem sufficiently established. Is the numinous really *wholly other*? The fact that experiences within creation, albeit negative ones, can point us towards the numinous suggests that it does share some continuity with the world. Quoting Wittgenstein,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 25, 21.

⁴¹ Ibid., 30.

⁴² Ibid., 68.

David Brown argues that negative description remains description, and thus has positive content: 'It is in fact an easy temptation to suppose that in piling up the negatives one is not engaged in description, whereas in putting the matter positively one is.... As Wittgenstein himself puts it, "Positive and negative propositions are on the same level", with a negative proposition presupposing a positive one and vice versa'.⁴³ In identifying the object of religious experiences as the 'wholly other' we are still making a positive statement about its relationship with this world, suggesting that 'wholly other' is not — in fact, cannot be — entirely discontinuous.

The fact that Otto's term leads us to theological discussions of God's attributes highlights its failure to remain strictly within the limitations of an epistemology in which knowledge is constructed by the individual human mind. Instead of remaining purely descriptive, Otto's discussion of the numinous attempts to define what it *is* rather than merely what we experience. This in turn leads him to view our experiences of the numinous from an implicit metaphysical perspective, something particularly evident in his argument that art provides an 'indirect' means of accessing the numinous realm. In distinguishing between art that creates a sense of magical surplus and that which directs us towards darkness or silence, Otto relies on an implicit metaphysical judgement that privileges darkness over light, silence over surplus. While darkness provides direct access to the wholly other, light, even the overpowering light that often accompanies mystical experiences, is only an indirect means of experiencing the numinous.

Otto's argument is that darkness and silence are merely absences of light and sound, and thus do not have any positive existence. "Void" is, like darkness and silence, a negation, but a negation that does away with every "this" and "here", in order that the "wholly other" may become actual'.⁴⁴ In the context of a painting or work of music, however, both darkness and silence are actively created: musical silence can only occur within the context of other musical sounds and structures, while the painter must consciously darken a white canvas. Regardless of the theological status of darkness relative to light, we *experience* both in *positive* terms, suggesting that language of transcending our experience provides a more appropriate description of our religious experiences: we perceive the wholly other in experiences that point beyond.

⁴³ David Brown, 'Wittgenstein Against the 'Wittgensteinians': A Reply to Kenneth Surin on the Divine Trinity', *Modern Theology* 2:3 (1986), 273; Brown quotes a conversation between Wittgenstein and Friedrich Waismann from Friedrich Waismann, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Brian McGuinness, Joachim Schulte and Moritz Schlick, *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), 87.

⁴⁴ Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 70.

By conceiving of the wholly other in terms of surplus or transcendence rather than absence and discontinuity, we no longer need a separate numinous faculty; although in religious experiences there is a sense of surpassing the limitations of the world — the transcendent *is* wholly other — we nevertheless begin *from* the world. Religious experience thus involves the orientation of our normal cognitive faculties towards that which surpasses them.

The inconsistencies of Otto's account can be resolved by acknowledging the metaphysical dependence of aesthetic judgements and, in particular, the implications of a *sensus communis* for the contrapurposiveness of the sublime. Although Otto is keen to distinguish between our sense of the numinous and an awareness of the sublime, the similarities between these two render them virtually indistinguishable, suggesting that Otto's differentiation may reflect his theological ideas more than the facts of empirical observation. Both the sublime and numinous are ineffable, awe-inspiring, 'terrible', and can only be substantiated through an appeal to metaphysics. For Otto, who believes our aesthetic judgements to be entirely subjective within a Kantian system, the metaphysical nature of religious experiences distinguishes them from aesthetic judgements, and requires the positing of an additional, numinous faculty to enable judgements of holiness. Such an additional faculty is unnecessary, however, if we recognise the inherent transcendence of aesthetic judgements themselves. Otto's numinous then becomes another way of understanding the sublime as it relates to the metaphysical source on which our judgements of contrapurposiveness are dependent. This metaphysical principle is 'wholly other', in the sense of being inherently beyond the limitations of human cognition, and yet remains directly relevant; through the *sensus communis*, judgements of sublime contrapurposiveness are made possible. If Otto's numinous is equivalent to the Kantian sublime, we can understand the differences between Otto and James in terms of aesthetic judgement. Whereas James focuses on religious experience in terms of the beautiful — that which points beyond itself in a disinterested manner — Otto views religion as the intensely emotional, ineffable, and seemingly contrapurposive sublime. Music, I have argued, functions as both an object of beauty and experience of sublimity, thus giving it the potential to facilitate the aesthetic religious experience of either James or Otto.

4. Neurology of Religious Experience

Otto and James both take the correspondence between aesthetic judgement and religious experience first identified by Schleiermacher as a basis for developing psychologi-

cal understandings of religion. James is more successful at distinguishing between the subjective study of religion and its theological implications, but Otto nevertheless draws our attention to the important fact that disinterested judgements of beauty do not capture the depth of our emotional engagement with religion, something more accurately modelled by his idea of the numinous, or, as I have suggested, the sublime. Before considering in greater detail the correspondence between musical features, aesthetic judgement, and cognitive understandings of religious experience, I would like to briefly examine how neurological research, which also deals with religion from a cognitive perspective, might expand our knowledge of the experienced characteristics of religion.

4.1. The Importance of Unity

One of the features of religious experience identified by Schleiermacher and James is the absolute and universal nature of its implications. Religion unifies and makes sense of the world by connecting our subjective experiences with those of others, just as in our judgements of beauty we become aware that our individual judgements must be bound to a transcendent standard. A possible physical manifestation of this tendency towards unification is suggested by an experiment performed by Eugene d'Aquili and Andrew Newberg in which magnetic imaging techniques were used to model blood flow in the brains of eight Tibetan Buddhist monks during meditation. In their meditation, the monks focused on a particular object or image to the exclusion of all else, an approach designed to reduce awareness of the self through complete, directed concentration. As one might expect, d'Aquili and Newberg found that the blood flow to attention association areas in the brain increased during meditation. They also found, however, that blood flow to the orientation association areas, the parts of the brain involved with determining position relative to the world, actually decreased. The areas that define where the self ends and the outside world begins were in effect turned off, leading d'Aquili and Newberg to conclude that meditation causes 'a breakdown of the self-other dichotomy and results in a sense of wholeness and unity'.⁴⁵

While this study establishes that focused attention leads to a sense of unity through the restriction of blood flow (deafferentation) to the brain's orientation areas, it does not prove that religious experience must always follow this pattern from loss of self to unification with the world. Instead, religious ritual often seeks to work in the

⁴⁵ Eugene G. D'Aquili and Andrew B. Newberg, *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 119.

opposite direction, taking two paradoxical objects and uniting them, thereby effecting religious meaning. Examples of this type of unifying activity abound in the Christian tradition, particularly in the sacraments, where bread becomes the body of Christ, water cleanses sin, and marriage joins two individuals into one flesh. It is not enough to believe that Jesus is both God and man abstractly, or to be cleansed of sin by word alone; these beliefs must also be enacted. Part of this need, d'Aquili and Newberg suggest, may have a neurological basis. The brain rarely processes information in only one area; rather, the information resonates and is repeated throughout. For example, 'Whatever is heard tends to be repeated within the mind/brain. In normally functioning individuals the actual physical repetition of whatever is heard is inhibited.... [In some cases, however,] the phenomenon of echolalia occurs in which individuals obligatorily repeat whatever they hear'.⁴⁶ The relationship between cognition and physical action is clearly apparent in our tendency to 'talk with our hands'. D'Aquili and Newberg propose that these observations are all manifestations of 'a powerful inbuilt mechanism that drives us to "act out" our thoughts', and it is this mechanism that disposes us to act out religious beliefs.⁴⁷

This process can also work in reverse, which explains why ritualised actions so often involve attempts to unify disparate, paradoxical elements. Rhythm and repetition are common features of religious ritual. Based on experiments with both animals and humans, 'One can infer that there is something about repetitive rhythmic stimuli that may, under the proper conditions, bring about the unusual neural state consisting of simultaneous high discharge of both the arousal and quiescent system'.⁴⁸ Ritual can produce a paradoxical state within the brain in which it is both calmed and aroused simultaneously. This, d'Aquili and Newberg propose, is what creates a sense of unity between the various components of the ritual: the 'fusion of symbols and their referents at various points in human religious ritual is undoubtedly accomplished by the underlying feeling of oneness that occurs when a particular ritual triggers the holistic operator', which is located in the orientation association area.⁴⁹ Thus, it would seem ritual and meditation both produce the same effect (unification), but through different means (rhythmic, repetitive activity vs. intense focus).

⁴⁶ Ibid., 88.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 90.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

4.2. Neurological Sources of Unification

Where might this desire for repetition and unity have originated? Harry Hunt argues that it is a by-product of the development of abstract thought, which often exhibits synaesthesias and cognitive relationships between disparate sensory elements. We describe music as moving up and down, we picture how words look when spelling them, and we look to the left when lying and to the right when recalling something from memory. Like these commonplace examples, synaesthesias in reports of altered states are ‘not felt as merely unusual sensory effects by those who report them but as cognitive meanings’.⁵⁰ This, Hunt argues, is because we evolved our ability to think abstractly — i.e., form purely mental ideas and constructs — by reusing our perceptual faculties in a self-referential way, hence the complicated synaesthetic web of self-reflection: “The “turning around” of thought would operate by penetrating back along the lines of the visual-spatial microgenesis of perception via synaesthetic translations in search of potentially “abstract” symbolic values’.⁵¹ If religious experience is a cognitive perception of the unity of all things, then it can also be described as the ‘ultimate’ example of synaesthesia; the apotheosis of abstract thought. Applying this idea, Hunt observes that ‘the “white light” experience reported in deep meditation, psychedelic, and near-death settings would — as the most preliminary form of visual perception — on this view be the most potentially open, encompassing, metaphoric vehicle — while externalised as direct awareness would be felt as “pure meaning”’.⁵²

This theory could explain the neurological process whereby concentration on rhythm and repetition leads to religious experiences. If the brain is reusing its perceptual facilities for abstract thought in a way that makes connections between normally unrelated elements then it is prone to being overwhelmed by these synaesthetic processes, in the same way a computer crashes when too many windows are left open. Michael Persinger draws on this idea in formulating his explanation for religious experiences. As the apotheosis of abstract thought, religious experience represents the point where the number of connections being made within the brain reaches its maximum, triggering ‘transient, electrical microseizures within deep structures of the temporal lobe’.⁵³ These microseizures, Persinger suggests, are the mechanism that produces the

⁵⁰ Harry T. Hunt, ‘A Cognitive Psychology of Mystical and Altered-State Experience’, *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 58 (1994), 472.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 473.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Michael A. Persinger, ‘Religious and Mystical Experiences As Artifacts of Temporal Lobe Function: A General Hypothesis’, *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 57:3 (1983), 1255.

dramatic holistic synaesthesias of religious experience, as they ‘allow coherence among brain structures that are not typically closely correlated’.⁵⁴ Such temporal-lobe transients (TLTs) can be triggered by ‘any condition that increases deep structure lability’, including ‘fatigue, social isolation, ...musical stimuli, smells (incense), ...fasting, ...certain psychedelic drugs, [and] intense pain’.⁵⁵

Some people, by virtue of their brain structure, will be more likely to have TLTs than others, although these microseizures are normal responses and ‘only their frequency or duration of occurrence and the degree to which they dominate the person’s behaviour predict... potential pathology’.⁵⁶ If we look at these extreme, pathological cases of temporal-lobe instability, however, we should find an increased frequency of religious experiences, and indeed, those suffering from temporal-lobe psychosis exhibit ‘a dominance of religious ideation or god-experience themes, often embedded within multiple conversions’.⁵⁷ Persinger also gave groups of students a survey to determine both their temporal-lobe instability, with questions about ‘olfactory, auditory, vestibular, and visual signs’, and their propensity to have paranormal experiences (‘I have had a vision’).⁵⁸ He found that those who scored highly for temporal-lobe instability also scored highly for paranormal tendency and vice versa: ‘People who reported to have had religious experiences were more likely to display “true” responses to statement clusters indicative of temporal-lobe signs compared to those people who did not report such experiences’.⁵⁹ While Persinger’s statistical conclusions do not demonstrate that temporal-lobe instability *causes* religious experience, they do suggest that its universal characteristics have physical correlates.

If religious experience is the result of an overabundance of connections and communications within the brain, as d’Aquili, Newberg, Hunt, and Persinger all suggest, then neurotransmitters must also play an important role. On Good Friday in 1962, Walter Pahnke gave capsules of either a placebo or psilocybin, a chemical mimic of the neurotransmitter serotonin, to divinity students at Harvard University before the

⁵⁴ Michael A. Persinger, ‘People Who Report Religious Experiences May Also Display Enhanced Temporal-Lobe Signs’, *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 58:3 (1984), 964.

⁵⁵ Persinger, ‘Religious and Mystical Experiences As Artifacts of Temporal Lobe Function: A General Hypothesis’, 1259.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Persinger, ‘People Who Report Religious Experiences May Also Display Enhanced Temporal-Lobe Signs’, 964.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 966–7.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 973.

evening church service. After the service each student was questioned about his experience, and based on a scale of mystical experience developed by Pahnke, those who received psilocybin on average scored 64 percent of the maximum, while those who received the control scored only 14 percent.⁶⁰ Because psilocybin mimics the characteristics of serotonin, the experiment demonstrated that increased serotonin levels can cause mystical experiences. Pahnke suggests that this is because increasing the amount of serotonin — an integral part of the brain's communication system — allows more neural connections to be made within the brain, thus facilitating the synaesthesia associated with religious experience.

5. From Aesthetics to Teleology

The central theme to emerge from these neurological discussions of religious experience is one of unity, whether expressed in terms of synaesthesia, or the coherence required for abstract thought. In religious experience, the boundaries between our minds and the phenomena we perceive are dissolved through a process of deafferentation and synaesthesia which Hunt argues follows from the basic nature of human cognition. We naturally seek an all-encompassing level of coherence and consistency in our comprehension of the world. This search for unity, according to neurologists, is a hallmark of religious experience. It is also the fundamental feature of aesthetic judgement in a Kantian system, which is responsible for confirming the purposiveness of the natural world, and thus the correspondence between our cognition of phenomena and the noumena they represent. Neurological associations between religious experience and unity, then, are exactly paralleled by the psychological theories of Otto, James, and Schleiermacher, which are derived to a greater or lesser extent from a Kantian understanding of aesthetic judgement. Religious experience involves an awareness of coherence or unity — in Kantian terms, formal purposiveness — that cannot be demonstrated by the human mind but must instead be posited as an *a priori* condition of cognition. In religious experience, however, this condition of cognition functions not only as a regulative principle — i.e., something that must be simply assumed — but also as a constitutive idea that actively shapes our understanding. In religious experiences we become personally and emotionally involved in this search for the single, comprehensive purpose implied by nature's purposiveness.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 83–5.

This search for a metaphysical source of nature's purposiveness obviously parallels the importance, within aesthetic judgement, of a metaphysical standard of intelligibility whereby our judgements of beauty are given universal validity. Even so, there is a crucial distinction between the two: whereas aesthetic judgement is dependent on a metaphysical standard of purposiveness, religious experience goes beyond the recognition of intelligibility to identify its ultimate source. Aesthetic judgements are content with knowledge of purposiveness; religious judgements involve positing knowledge of purpose. There is a close association in Kant's thought between formal purposiveness and teleology, something suggested by the progression in the *Critique of Judgement* from aesthetic to teleological judgements. We may not need to identify an object's purpose to have knowledge of its formal purposiveness, but must we not assume that purposive objects are also *purposeful*? Discussing reflective judgements, which share a similar structure to aesthetic determinations, Eva Shaper highlights this ambiguous relationship with teleological issues: 'Reflective judgement, when brought to bear on assemblages or aggregates of observed facts, has to assume... that nature can be understood, that it is intelligible. Looking for principles by which to comprehend and group natural phenomena is at least very like believing that nature is ordered as if it were designed'.⁶¹ Although we can perhaps conclude that purposiveness requires a purpose, this inference has limited potential as a cosmological argument. As Shaper points out, we need not assume the presence of an agent behind such designing: purpose can be, for example, based on the logic of natural selection. Kant's reliance on the purposiveness of nature to allow for both aesthetic and reflective judgements nevertheless directs us towards questions of design. Once again, from the standpoint of transcendental idealism the source of purposiveness in nature is immaterial: what is important for our cognition is that the world is intelligible, not why this is the case.

In practice, however, judgements of formal purposiveness inevitably raise questions about the origin of the object's purpose, questions that are often seen as fundamentally religious. Friedrich Schleiermacher's feeling of absolute dependence, for example, can be understood as reflecting this sense that we live in a purposive universe, yet are unable to identify the source of this purposiveness, one of the conditions of possibility for our cognition. Even though the nature of such a teleological source is philosophically immaterial, this horizon to our knowledge is inherently intriguing and provides an account of the association between Kantian aesthetics, which raises these issues of

⁶¹Eva Schaper, 'Taste, Sublimity, and Genius: The Aesthetics of Nature and Art', in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. P. Guyer (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 370.

purposiveness, and experiential understandings of religion. In aesthetic judgements we identify formal purposiveness while remaining unable to establish any specific purpose. Attempts to identify the nature and source of this purpose are central to the idea of cognitive play: aesthetic judgement consists in our attempts to understand the purpose underlying formal purposiveness. Aesthetic judgement thus inevitably, if not logically, raises questions about the origin of purposiveness and leads to areas of metaphysical, often theological, speculation.

It is this tendency to move from purposiveness to purpose that provides the most convincing argument for positing a theological interpretation of Kant's common sense. The *sensus communis* is a metaphysical principle that is inaccessible to our individual minds, yet has a *direct impact on our cognition*. To understand the nature of this principle, and also to investigate, in conceptual terms, the characteristics of intelligibility, requires the assumption of a metaphysical perspective. This need not be theological; it could be the presupposition of naturalism, or a humanist understanding of human nature. The problem with both of these approaches is that although they cannot be shown to be more or less likely than a theological interpretation — within the limitations of a subjective epistemological system — they have less explanatory power when questions about purposiveness lead to questions of purpose. Naturalism may be able to provide a basis for the universality of aesthetic judgements (explaining purposiveness), but as Shaper notes, it struggles to cope with the question that inevitably follows: why is nature structured (purposed) in the way that it is? Of course it is perfectly legitimate to reject this teleological rejoinder as misguided; perhaps there is no specific reason why the world is structured as it is. Certainly our judgements of purposiveness do not require the identification of any specific purpose. The point, however, is that it is natural to want to understand purposiveness in teleological terms, and that it is this movement from intelligibility to explanation — which constitutes the play of our cognitive powers typical of aesthetic judgements — that is implied in our aesthetic judgements, and accounts, on an epistemological level, for the association between beauty and religious experience. It is thus consistent with our experiences of beauty and religion to posit a theological explanation of the metaphysical principle underlying the universality of aesthetic judgements.

6. Religious Experience in Music

This movement towards unity, or, in aesthetic terms, from intelligibility to teleology, helps us to understand, within the limitations of human-mind-dependent knowledge,

why music appears theologically loaded. Music, I have argued, is particularly capable of revealing the signal of transcendence at the heart of aesthetic judgement: i.e., the *sensus communis*. In the first place, it actively resists the imposition of conceptual content — both in terms of extra-musical meaning and its formal structure — and thus facilitates what Kant calls cognitive play: pleasure in the process of determining a purposive object's purpose. Cognitive play ends once a specific purpose has been identified; aesthetic objects resist this conceptual determination and, as a consequence, allow for extended aesthetic reflection that points towards unanswered teleological questions, with their attendant religious implications.

Moreover, music is able to appear as a free beauty, like nature, because it is internally contrapurposive. Within its artistic world, music's form repeatedly thwarts our expectations, thus appearing to contradict our predictions of purposiveness and leading to emotional reactions typical of the sublime; reactions that Diana Raffman argues constitute the music's meaning.⁶² This emotional involvement is not entirely positive, nor wholly detached, because musical worlds are not simply representations of the natural world, and thus 'safe', but seem to constitute their own, independent spheres of reality. Sublimity within a musical world is not simply a representation of the sublime in nature, but a direct instance of the sublime itself, although in a temporally-dependent form. Even so, because music's artistic world exists within the context provided by nature we recognise music as fundamentally intelligible, thus transforming our experiences of the musical sublime into an aesthetic appreciation of music's free beauty.

This combination of beauty and sublimity creates a sense of personal involvement in the issues of cognitive transcendence raised by aesthetic judgement. What we experience in music is akin to Schleiermacher's feeling of absolute dependence: as we are carried along by the internal sublimity of musical contrapurposiveness, we experience directly the sense of metaphysical dependence that I have argued is inherent to aesthetic judgement. As I have repeatedly cautioned, such an experience does not allow us to conclude that the metaphysical *sensus communis* in fact exists, since we could argue that judgements of the sublime do not reveal anything about the natural world, but simply reflect our cognitive desire for unification. Even so, just as our perception of nature is only valid given the actual correspondence between our cognitive desire for purposiveness and an objective purposiveness of the natural world, so, too, is our

⁶² Diana Raffman, *Language, Music, and Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).

perception of music as free beauty dependent on our ability to correctly perceive this formal purposiveness.

Importantly, the metaphysical dependence of aesthetic judgements, and, in particular, of our perception of music, can be experienced as having *religious* significance; in James's terms, musical beauty can be experienced as something intrinsically related to the divine in a way that encourages personal involvement. The historical association between a Kantian understanding of aesthetics and cognitive theories of religion strongly implies a link between our perception of beauty and experience of religion. More significantly, the characteristics of religious experience identified by cognitive psychologists and neurologists are mirrored in our perception of beauty, and, in particular, our engagement with the free beauty of music. We can see this correspondence by comparing our Kantian understanding of musical beauty with the conditions of religious experience defined by William James:

Religious experience	Music
Promotes non-conceptual unity	Resists conceptual determination; appears grammatical, thus suggesting unity or purposiveness despite 'annihilating the material by means of the form'
Points towards limitations of thought	Raises questions of purpose; challenges the basis for judgements of purposiveness; draws attention to our implicit dependence on the <i>sensus communis</i>
Inspires personal involvement	Perceived as natural; inspires emotional reactions and thus personal identification

Music is an example of free beauty, appearing formally purposive while resisting attempts to reduce its meaning to a specific understanding of purpose. This formal intelligibility leads to a consideration of how we might understand the work as a whole, despite its internal contrapurposiveness; this in turn directs our thoughts towards the dependence of aesthetic judgements on a metaphysical common sense. Music points to the limitations on thought on two levels: philosophically, by leading us to consider the source of our aesthetic judgements; and experientially, through the actual dependence of these judgements on the *sensus communis*. This experiential dimension is particularly evident in our perception of the sublime within music's artistic world, since contrapurposiveness is not a property of the musical object, but entirely dependent on the judgement of the subject, and thus grounded in this metaphysical common sense. The utter subjectivity of the sublime, coupled with its intense emotionality, enables music to inspire the type of emotional involvement and personal identification also typical of religious experiences.

Music is also capable of facilitating the types of synaesthetic and unifying processes associated with religious experience considered from a neurological perspective. Music displays features of linguistic grammar; creates its own, independent musical worlds; provides a vehicle for linguistic and representational content through the addition of words and extramusical points of reference; leads to judgements of beauty and the sublime; involves our bodies in the perception of rhythm and generation of aesthetic emotions; and unifies the paradoxical elements of intelligibility and ineffability. Through all of these means, music facilitates unification: of the faculties of our cognition, and between our minds and the noumenal world. As I remarked at the end of the previous chapter, music is both a projection of the structures of cognition and a phenomenal object of our perception. As such, its nature is intimately bound up with that of aesthetic judgement, and specifically, with what I have argued is its dependence on a metaphysical common sense. Understood within a Kantian framework, the features of our aesthetic engagement with music are closely associated with cognitive understandings of religious experience. This is, in part, due to historical factors but also, I would suggest, reflects the inherently metaphysical nature of aesthetic judgement as understood within transcendental idealism. Music, as both human creation and free beauty, is not only able to direct our thoughts towards those features of aesthetic judgement associated with religious experience, but actually depends upon these features for its paradoxical status as both purposive yet without specific purpose.

7. Summary

Although Kant does not identify a link between aesthetics and religion, Schleiermacher quickly concludes that religious experience ought to be associated with aesthetic judgement rather than moral reasoning. Schleiermacher does not recognise the epistemological dependence of aesthetic judgements on metaphysical knowledge, but intuitively senses the appropriateness of aligning religion with aesthetics. The non-conceptuality, universality, and transcendence typical of religious feelings are also characteristic of aesthetic judgements, and Schleiermacher consequently suggests that aesthetic objects, particularly music, are to a large extent interchangeable with more specifically religious content. With James and Otto the connection between aesthetics and religious experience is less explicit, but can still be discerned in references to the non-conceptuality and unity or universality of religion, features also identified in neurological studies of religious experience. Religion unifies knowledge by postulating a 'spiritual world' that completes and gives purpose to nature and experience. Aesthetic

judgement moves in a complementary direction, creating a state of cognitive play in which the purposiveness of an object, as discerned through the activity of a metaphysical common sense, is used to postulate possible explanations for its intelligibility. Music functions as a particularly strong signal of transcendence, and as such creates experiences of cognitive play that almost inevitably lead to religious speculation.

Such correspondences between the nature of aesthetic judgement and religious experience are insufficient to show that music *is in fact* inherently religious, or that it is dependent on theological knowledge, but they do provide justification for viewing the metaphysical dependence of aesthetic judgements in theological terms. In a sense, then, our argument has now come full circle: having set out to demonstrate, in a human-mind-dependent epistemology, that music can be understood as inherently related to knowledge of God, we have identified an element within subjective aesthetic judgements — the *sensus communis* — in which metaphysical knowledge plays a constitutive role. Applying Kant's aesthetic theory to musical beauty, we have determined how this metaphysical common sense colours our perception of music and enables music to appear uniquely among human arts as a free beauty, independently of natural beauty. In this chapter, we have shown that aesthetic judgement is not only dependent on metaphysical knowledge on an epistemological level, but is also experienced in relation to explicitly religious experiences. What is left, then, is to investigate the nature of this metaphysical standard from within a theological perspective, a task to which we now turn.

5

Beauty as Knowledge of God

*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher
than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*
— *Isaiah 55:9*

1. Introduction

1.1. Summary of Previous Conclusions

As I argued in the introduction, the benefit of using Immanuel Kant's aesthetics to consider whether music's theological significance can be understood epistemologically is that it provides a stringent challenge to claims that knowledge of experience is dependent on what Kant terms metaphysics: ideas that cannot be directly induced from the fact of our cognition or our empirical observations, and are thus inaccessible to human-mind-dependent understanding. In the first chapter I argued that even within an epistemology in which knowledge is constructed by the independent human mind, a metaphysical principle or common sense is required to both explain and, to some extent, constitute our judgements of beauty. If beauty is a matter of intelligibility, we cannot know that our determinations of what is formally intelligible agree with those of others unless we assume that, within the inaccessible, unconditioned features of our cognition there is a principle common to all individual human minds. On a philosophical level, then, judgements of beauty are dependent on a standard of purposiveness that, because it is metaphysical, could be understood as theological.

In chapters two and three, we applied Kant's understanding of aesthetic judgement, and its relationship to this metaphysical common sense, to both the formal fea-

tures of musical objects, and our subjective perception of musical beauty. Music, I argued, does not represent the beauty of the natural world, or the semantic content of language, but instead applies formal structures similar to those found in linguistic communication to the deconstruction of conceptual meaning; thus, as an object, both evincing formal purposiveness through its structure and resisting the imposition of specific interpretations. In performance, these features of the musical object unfold through time, creating a musical world with the characteristics of sublimity. Thus, on one level music is heard as sublime, while on another we recognise that any apparent sublimity will subsequently be revealed as intelligible. In this way, music is able to create the sense of purposiveness without a purpose characteristic of natural beauty without directly representing the beauty of nature. Moreover, the existence of sublimity within music's artistic world intensifies the epistemological connection between our perception of music and the metaphysical common sense that, in part, constitutes our aesthetic judgements.

Finally, in the previous chapter we examined whether there was any evidence that this epistemological dependence on metaphysical knowledge might to some extent account for the sense that music is theologically loaded. Examining the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, along with psychological theories of religious experience proposed by William James, Rudolf Otto, and contemporary neurological research, we identified a strong correlation between the features of aesthetic judgements — specifically, their non-conceptuality and universality — and those associated with religious experiences. While such correspondence does not prove that aesthetic judgements are, in fact, related to religious beliefs, it does confirm that the features of musical beauty are consistent with those identified in religious experiences, and thus that, on the basis of experience, a theological interpretation of Kant's metaphysical common sense is appropriate.

1.2. Chapter Outline

In this chapter we will provide precisely such an interpretation from the perspective of Christian theology. First, however, we will return to some of the issues of theological knowledge in a human-mind-dependent epistemology discussed in the introduction, but this time from a more explicitly theological perspective. There, I suggested that although we may disagree with claims that knowledge is constructed by human minds, to do so is to directly question many of the operating epistemological premises of modern thought, thus diminishing the relevance of any link discovered between

musical perception and theological knowledge. Instead, I argued that by sticking firmly within a human-mind-dependent epistemology, and using Kant's aesthetics as a particularly stringent example for analysis, any conclusions about music's theological significance would be more widely applicable.

With this logic in mind, in this chapter we will consider how theologians, particularly the Transcendental Thomists and proponents of realism, have reacted to Kant's epistemological claims. While both of these schools question, perhaps with reason, Kant's premises, for our purposes Bernard Lonergan provides a more useful theological approach, analysing the features of Kant's own thought to expose its constitutive dependence on metaphysics. Similarly, I have argued that aesthetic judgements in a Kantian system are dependent on a metaphysical common sense that provides a locus for theological knowledge within the heart of our perception of beauty. In dialogue with Lonergan and our conclusions thus far, we will be able to establish the relationship between music and knowledge of God, before briefly exploring some of the ethical implications of this connection.

2. Theological Knowledge in a Subjective Epistemology

2.1. Transcendental Thomism

As discussed in the introduction, one of the primary challenges of Kant's epistemology to theological discourse is that its combination of a priori foundations and empirical arguments leaves theological knowledge largely (if not entirely) irrelevant, not only within philosophy but for all other areas of human investigation as well. For our judgements of phenomena to accurately reflect things-in-themselves, the world must be intelligible to human cognition; i.e., the 'supersensible substrate of humanity' must be correlated with the noumenal structure of the world. This is something that, by definition, we are unable to prove, since we can have no direct knowledge of the noumenal realm. It is confirmed, however, by our empirical experience of phenomena, which generally do conform to our expectations of purposiveness. Purposiveness must simply be accepted if we are to maintain that cognition about the world is, in fact, possible; because cognition does seem to occur, the world must be purposive. The importance of this argument lies precisely in its circularity. To exercise our theoretical reason we do not need to know the source of the world's purposiveness, only that it is purposive; something that can be established through the combination of an a priori principle and empirical observation. As a consequence, while we may enjoy wondering

whether intelligibility points to an intelligent creator, such speculation is both outside the bounds of philosophical knowledge and utterly irrelevant to it.¹

A common reaction to the Kantian challenge — among theologians who admit the force of Kant's critiques — has been to argue against the absolute division of noumenal and phenomenal realms. Rather than distinguishing between our perception of objects and things-in-themselves, perception is understood as bound up with the intrinsic nature of those things we perceive. This position receives its first systematic explication in Joseph Maréchal's five-volume work, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*, published from 1927. Drawing on Thomistic thought, Maréchal argues that knowledge is not simply the reception and categorisation of phenomena, but involves a dynamic relationship between the knower and the object. 'There is a real assimilation of the object to the knower; the knower *becomes* the object, not "entitatively" of course but "intentionally"'.² Through perception we enter into the objects perceived, so that the Kantian distinction between things-in-themselves and their phenomenal presentation to our cognition is dissolved. This dynamic interaction between object and knower, which crosses Kant's boundary between noumena and phenomena, undermines the self-sufficiency of our cognition by making it dependent on a metaphysical understanding that allows for such intentional assimilation.

Karl Rahner takes Maréchal's argument a step further, suggesting that this dependence of intentional knowledge on metaphysics provides our intellect with access to an infinite horizon that implies the existence of a necessary (as well as infinite) being. Metaphysical certainty is beyond the limitations of our subjective cognition, yet the recognition of this limit itself constitutes transcendence beyond it. This process of limitation and transcendence can be repeated indefinitely: 'in the fact that [man] affirms the possibility of a merely *finite* horizon of questioning, this possibility is already surpassed, and man shows himself to be a being with an *infinite* horizon'.³ The only way that such an infinite horizon can be explained is by positing a being that is itself

¹ Christopher Insole's discussion of the role played by God in Kant's moral theory is illustrative here: while Kant relies on God to underwrite the 'complete highest good', the *summum bonum*'s cognitive element — i.e., that which directs our moral decisions — is entirely independent of theological knowledge. Thus, Kant does not deny God's existence, or even his importance to human life, but strictly denies the relevance of theological knowledge to human cognition (Christopher J. Insole, 'The Irreducible Importance of Religious Hope in Kant's Conception of the Highest Good', *Philosophy* 83 [2008]).

² E. L. Mascall, *The Openness of Being: Natural Theology Today* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971), 65. The distinction between 'entitatively' and 'intentionally' reflects the cognitive nature of our access to noumena: we do not, for example, enter into the object's physical being.

³ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. W. V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1978), 32.

infinite, i.e. God. Such an argument would appear vulnerable to the challenge that by accepting the subjective orientation of Kant's philosophy, Rahner can no longer reason from phenomenal thought to noumenal reality. Like Maréchal, however, Rahner questions this division between our minds and external reality. 'Knowing, Rahner tells us, does not come about through a *contact* of the intellect with an object, but by their becoming *the same*'.⁴ Thus, to have knowledge of an infinite horizon the horizon must itself exist independently of our minds.

Rahner recognises that this argument only works if we agree with his original premise: that in knowing an object it is not merely perceived phenomenally, but entered into noumenally. Underlying this premise is the conviction that such apprehension of being is possible, a principle he calls the 'pre-apprehension of being'. Rahner describes the entire process:

When a man takes as the 'object' of his knowledge in metaphysics that which he affirms simultaneously in the pre-apprehension which makes possible his knowledge of [the] world, then he necessarily makes it a represented object in the only way in which he can have such an object at all: he represents it as a thing, as the things of the world are.⁵

The pre-apprehension of being allows us to enter into the objects of our perception, thereby gaining knowledge of them. In the case of our infinite horizon, the pre-apprehension of being allows us to objectify this metaphysical orientation. This completes a logical circle: the pre-apprehension of being is an awareness of a necessary 'ground of our being', an awareness that is identical with the objective knowledge of infinite being encountered through knowledge of the infinite horizon.⁶

The problem with Rahner's approach is that in appropriating a Thomistic understanding of knowledge he is also implicitly accepting the theological presuppositions on which Thomism is founded. Thus, to the extent that he intends to put forward a cosmological argument, the conclusion that God is necessary for pre-apprehension of being and knowledge of an infinite horizon would already seem to be implicit in the premises. Moreover, these premises are not insubstantial, but fundamentally alter many of the basic features of transcendental idealism. Knowledge is not derived strictly from phenomena, but involves engagement with the thing-in-itself, an assertion that violates what is perhaps Kant's most basic tenet: that objects conform to our understanding. Rahner's approach is not so much Kantian as a subjective reformula-

⁴ Mascall, *The Openness of Being*, 68.

⁵ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 399.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

tion of Scholasticism; his means of connecting philosophy with theology is to subtly but significantly alter the principles of modern thought. While such a move may be justified, the point of identifying aesthetic judgement as a signal of transcendence is that it can allow us to consider whether music is theologically loaded in a way that does not initially require such an alteration of Kant's philosophical programme.

Because Rahner so dramatically changes the character of transcendental idealism, he fails to demonstrate how theology is relevant for philosophical enquiry without presupposing its importance. Even if knowledge does require the pre-apprehension of being, the idea that in knowing objects we become aware of their noumenal existence can simply be added to Kant's system as one of the a priori conditions of cognition, like purposiveness, that are validated empirically on the basis that we do, in fact, think. God may exist, and it may be his providential action that allows us to know things-in-themselves, but the method whereby such access is granted remains ultimately immaterial. In contrast, the *sensus communis* is not simply a condition of cognition, but a principle that actively shapes our aesthetic judgements, since Kant maintains that taste can be cultivated.⁷ Thus, the transcendence of aesthetic judgement raises the possibility that metaphysical speculation, including theological discourse, might actually be relevant within transcendental idealism as it stands. At the same time, however, we are unable to turn this transcendence into a cosmological argument for the existence of God; although aesthetic judgement is dependent on common sense, this remains inscrutable to our cognition within a Kantian epistemology. We can thus use theology to investigate this *sensus communis* and provide conclusions that are relevant within transcendental idealism when viewed from within a Christian perspective, but I will not attempt to argue the other way from Kant to Christianity.

2.2. Realism

If we are simply going to assume a particular theological perspective, why bother with idealism at all? Would it not be easier to simply begin from a realist theological position? Étienne Gilson makes this argument in *The Realist Beginner's Handbook*, and it is recapitulated by E. L. Mascall in his Gifford Lectures on *The Openness of Being*. Mascall jokingly observes the amount of effort expended by idealist theologians to establish a position from which knowledge of God is possible, remarking that 'the most obvious characteristic of [this] approach to theism... is its length.... I do not think that the proximity of these writers is accidental or purely temperament. It is, I think, almost inevitable

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 356.

in a thinker who feels bound to justify the validity of knowledge before he allows himself to indulge in the luxury of knowing'.⁸ He goes on to argue that an idealist philosophy (at least when combined with a subjective orientation) is ultimately unable to provide extra-mental knowledge: 'Once you have refused to assume the reliability of your apprehension of beings other than yourself... you are launched on the endless process of trying ineffectually to escape from the prison of your own subjectivity'.⁹ Gilson presents the problem more scathingly, commenting that 'idealists are people for whom the normal can only be a particular case of the pathological'.¹⁰

It seems, however, that the proponents of realism protest too much.¹¹ If a straightforward realism were as obviously preferable to idealism as they maintain, surely Gilson and Mascall would not need to put forward such an argument. Mascall admits the overwhelming dominance of idealism in modern thought, congratulating himself that 'the influence of Descartes and Kant has been so strong in the modern world that it takes a very courageous and persistent thinker to question the basic assumption of idealism'.¹² Idealism, however, is not confined to Descartes and Kant but has been one of the enduring strands of Western thought, characterising not only Platonic and Neoplatonic thought, but the first millennium of Christian philosophy as well. Consequently, I believe there are two compelling reasons, from our perspective, to remain within an idealist framework rather than taking fully realist approach. First, on a pragmatic level, the importance of idealism — which Mascall defines as 'the view that the objects which we perceive are simply *ideas* inside our minds' — means that realist arguments do not engage with the vast majority of philosophical discourse, thus dramatically limiting their relevance. As this lack of relevance is precisely the problem that a Kantian approach to music's theological significance seeks to overcome, it would be counterproductive to simply assert a realist theological position at this point. Secondly, because we are interested in how our perception of music is dependent on knowledge of God, it makes sense to remain within a philosophical framework that places the emphasis on our perception and cognition.

⁸ Mascall, *The Openness of Being*, 91.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Étienne Gilson, *Le Réalisme Méthodique* (Paris: Chez Pierre Téqui, 1937), 87; quoted in Mascall, *The Openness of Being*, 95.

¹¹ I feel justified in quoting an Elizabethan cliché since Mascall begins his defence of realism with Andrew Marvell's complaint to his mistress: 'Had we but world enough, and time, This coyness, Lady, were no crime' (Ibid., 91).

¹² Ibid., 92.

I think Mascall is correct, however, that subjective idealism — as distinguished from Platonic or Augustinian idealism where knowledge is given objective confirmation by an external authority — is ultimately vacuous. As we have seen, Maréchal and Rahner found that they could only achieve knowledge of noumena by inserting a metaphysical assumption — that knowledge is intentional as well as perceptive — into Kant's epistemological system. I have criticised their approach because I think it does violence to Kant's thought, thereby leading to conclusions that are irrelevant for those unwilling to accept a Thomistic epistemology *prima facie*. A far more subtle and effective method of connecting transcendental idealism with theology, I suggest, is to *examine Kant's own implicit metaphysical assumptions*, and in turn consider these from within a specific theological perspective.

2.3. Bernard Lonergan

Bernard Lonergan takes precisely this approach in *Insight*, a voluminous discussion of theology and metaphysics published in 1957. His central argument in relation to Kant concerns the genesis of the categories of understanding, which Kant appropriates from Aristotelian metaphysics as a means of schematising conceptual knowledge. The categories represent an exhaustive set of classes applied by the mind to sense impressions in order to conceptualise their content. As we are aware of our perceptions in time, we interrogate them for evidence of things like quantity, quality, relation and modality. Lonergan argues that this list of categories is not, in fact, an *a priori* condition of cognition, but is rather generated in response to our experience of the world. We can understand this argument by comparing the categories with another *a priori* condition of cognition: the idea of intelligibility or purposiveness. Unlike purposiveness, which must be assumed before cognition is possible, it is unclear that ideas of quality or quantity are similarly required by the mere fact of cognition. Kant even suggests that this list is generated empirically, from the observation of how we judge.¹³ Lonergan seizes on this admission as evidence that 'By their very genesis concepts are united with data', in this case data provided by the nature of rational judgement itself.¹⁴

What Kant fails to appreciate is his dependency on the unconditioned structure of reason itself. If the categories are generated from the nature of rational judgement, on

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), A79–81/B105–107.

¹⁴ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Longmans, 1961), 340.

what basis are these characteristics of reason established? Attempts to derive the rules of logic are met with a paradox: the ‘question is whether correct judgements occur, and the answer to it is the act of making one’.¹⁵ Echoing Descartes’ famous affirmation of existence, Lonergan argues that because judgement cannot be logically derived, it must be ‘self-authenticating and decisive’, with its authority grounded in the ‘self-affirmation of the knower’, i.e., the fact of our consciousness.¹⁶ The nature of the unconditioned — the formal structure of rationality — is inextricably bound up with our *noumenal* existence, since these unconditioned laws of reason are by definition prior to Kant’s subjective cognition.

This leads Lonergan into a discussion of being, which he defines as ‘the objective of the pure desire to know’.¹⁷ Before considering his account of this idea, it is worth reminding ourselves of the status of being in Kantian thought. As we discussed in the introduction, Kant removes the category of being beyond the reach of philosophical discussion by making the phenomenal mind the seat of cognition. The transcendental attributes of being — beauty, goodness, and truth — become the focus of Kant’s three cognitive faculties, with beauty related to judgement, goodness with practical reason, and truth with theoretical reason. The idea of being itself is rendered superfluous, since all philosophical reflection is confined within the phenomenal mind of the individual; there is no need for a concept of the thinker’s noumenal existence because we neither have access to this noumenal object, nor is it relevant for cognition.

Kant’s scepticism about being in part reflects concerns inherited from late Scholasticism that the concept of being — since it applies to both God and creatures — must be devoid of conceptual meaning. If ‘being’ has the same meaning when applied to God and to creatures (it is univocal), then we are able to comprehend God’s essence conceptually. But we cannot comprehend a transcendent and infinite God. Therefore, either ‘being’ has a different definition when predicated of God (it is equivocal), in which case the term is inaccessible and practically meaningless, or being does not have conceptual content. This is not the same thing as lacking meaning altogether; Duns Scotus’s great innovation was to suggest that being’s philosophical importance is taxonomic rather than strictly conceptual. Being, as the most abstract of ideas, is also the least defined. Scotus argues that just as the general idea of ‘flower’ contains less information than the specific idea ‘dandelion’, so, too, the idea of ‘being’, which

¹⁵ Ibid., 319.

¹⁶ Ibid., 340, 319.

¹⁷ Ibid., 348.

encompasses all that is, conveys less information than any other concept beneath it. 'Being' carries no specific content, but it is the idea that unites and subsumes all other knowledge. Thus, the 'concept of being is common to God and creatures because in it the two wholly diverse realities of infinite and finite being are conceived in an imperfect way'.¹⁸

Picking up on being's role as that which unites and subsumes all knowledge, Lonergan argues that it denotes 'all that is known, and all that remains to be known'.¹⁹ All objects contribute to this sum of knowledge, but unlike Scotus, Lonergan does not believe that objects are themselves examples of being, merely subsets of it. Whereas Scotus distinguishes between God, who is infinite being, and being itself, Lonergan revives the possibility that being might be properly and primarily attributed to God, as he who is capable of comprehending all knowledge. In defining being as such, we are saying nothing of its content: the definition does not establish what the knowledge that constitutes being *is*, only that being is constituted by the sum of all knowledge. It is thus a definition 'of the second order. Other definitions determine what is meant. But this definition is more remote for it assigns, not what is meant by being, but how that meaning is to be determined'.²⁰ The advantage of such a second-order definition of being is that it avoids the problems of divine knowledge and analogy that plagued later Scholastic philosophy. If we define God as being, the sum of all knowledge, we are not claiming to know what God *is*, i.e., what is *meant* by God, but simply defining him as that which encompasses all knowledge; as opposed to human being, which is capable only of finite knowledge.²¹

This distinction between being in itself and our definition of it as the sum of all knowledge reflects the fact that to *know being* would require us to actually comprehend all knowledge in its entirety. Thus, we cannot formulate an ontological proof that such ultimate being actually exists. Yet the notion of being can be defined philosophically as the set containing all knowledge, and this definition alone has certain implications for our understanding of the relationship between human cognition and

¹⁸ Stephen D. Dumont, 'Transcendental Being: Scotus and Scotists', *Topoi* 11:2 (1992), 139.

¹⁹ Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 350.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ I agree with David Brown that the *viae negativa* and *eminentia* do provide actual knowledge of God, but it is of this second-order Lonergan identifies in which we understand God through his relationship with us (i.e., that our knowledge is limited and his is infinite) rather than as he exists in himself (David Brown, 'Wittgenstein Against the 'Wittgensteinians': A Reply to Kenneth Surin on the Divine Trinity', *Modern Theology* 2:3 [1986], 273).

knowledge. According to Lonergan, an idea represents 'the content of an act of understanding'.²² Because being comprises all knowledge, each idea provides access to a finite subset of being, what he calls 'proportionate being'. Like Rahner, Lonergan recognises that although our ability to know as humans is limited, the fact that we are aware of a limit is, in itself, a transcendence of these limitations, something that reflects an 'unrestricted desire to know'. In relation to this infinite horizon of questioning, being becomes 'the objective of an unrestricted desire to know': it is the infinite object towards which our unlimited desire for knowledge is directed.²³

For Lonergan, however, first-order being is not an encyclopaedic record of discrete concepts, but rather the *action* by which knowledge is generated. This collection of conceptual knowledge is rather the idea of being, which represents 'the content of an unrestricted act of understanding that primarily understood itself and consequently grasped every other intelligibility'.²⁴ To say that God is being is not the same as saying he is omniscient (although omniscience is implied in being and represents the idea of being), but rather that he is capable of an unrestricted *act* of understanding, rather than simply our unrestricted *desire* to know. Yet we cannot logically demonstrate that such an unrestricted act of understanding occurs, because full knowledge of being is by definition beyond our comprehension. If we begin from a position that affirms the existence of pure being, however, we can identify God with this unrestricted act of understanding. We can thus logically demonstrate that God is being, but not that either God or being exist:

For when we grasp what God is, our grasp is not an unrestricted act of understanding but a restricted act of understanding that extrapolates from itself to an unrestricted act and by asking ever further questions arrives at a list of attributes of the unrestricted act. Accordingly, what is grasped is not the unrestricted act but the extrapolation that proceeds from the properties of a restricted act to the properties of the unrestricted act. Hence, when the extrapolation is completed, there remains the further question whether the unrestricted act is just an object of thought or a reality.²⁵

Thus, Lonergan acknowledges that his cosmological argument is not logically definitive. Instead, we are convinced that an unrestricted act of understanding does take place by our experience of the unconditioned foundations of reason. 'On the one

²² Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 644.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 657.

²⁵ Ibid., 670.

hand, then, the ontological argument is to be rejected, for a conception alone is an insufficient ground for judgement. On the other hand, what has to be added to mere conception is not an experience of God but a grasp of the unconditioned'.²⁶ Lonergan argues that our ability to desire and acquire knowledge through judgement first requires the definition of what knowledge is. As we have seen, this is not something that can be determined on the basis of logic, since it is the source of reason itself that is in question. Judgement is self-authenticating: in judging that we judge, we produce an empirical example of our judgement. Even so, if we seek to know what judgement, and in turn, knowledge itself, *is*, we must go beyond judgement into the realm of the unconditioned. Since being is an unrestricted act of understanding, it is in the idea of being that we discover what it means to know.

This observation brings us back to Lonergan's treatment of Kant, who would agree that the structure of rational thought is unconditioned, lying outside the purview of his philosophical system. Kant's argument, however, is that this unconditioned reason, based in our noumenal existence, is not directly relevant for cognition. Instead, the basic rules of logical thought are among the principles that must be asserted at the outset, but once established can be safely assumed. Lonergan presents Kant as maintaining that 'the transcendental dialectic rests its affirmation of a transcendental illusion on the ground that the unconditioned is not a constituent factor in judgement but simply a regulative ideal of pure reason'.²⁷ The unconditioned is a regulative ideal of judgement — i.e., it must be assumed for judgements to occur — but does not itself *constitute* any judgement. What Lonergan argues is that this is not true in the generation of the categories, which are created by judgement *on the basis of* judgement. Thus, 'the schematism of the categories provides the link between sense and the pure categories of the understanding; such a link is prior to judgement and a constituent factor in judgement as concrete'.²⁸

3. Applying Lonergan's Method to Aesthetic Judgement

This is precisely the dynamic operating in the relationship between aesthetic judgement and common sense. Lonergan is interested in the implicit metaphysical presuppositions that shape theoretical reason in Kant's system, arguing that the generation of categories under which intuitions are conceptualised requires an inquiry into the

²⁶ Ibid., 672.

²⁷ Ibid., 641.

²⁸ Ibid.

nature of reason itself, something that subjective cognition (which is based on rational judgement) is unable to undertake. Kant's description of theoretical reason is thus implicitly dependent on a metaphysical property — the unconditioned — that lies outside transcendental idealism yet directly impacts our subjective cognition (in this case, determining the categories through which we understand our sensory intuitions). The unconditioned is by definition inaccessible to subjective philosophical investigation, yet is experienced as the ground underlying our conceptual judgements. Although we cannot logically demonstrate that such a ground exists, Lonergan submits that an experience of the unconditioned nevertheless provides proof of its existence, and in turn of being and of God. 'Proof is not some automatic process that results in judgement.... All that can be set down in these pages is a set of signs. The signs can represent a relevant virtually unconditioned. But grasping it and making the consequent judgement is an immanent act of rational consciousness that each has to perform for himself and that no one else can perform for him'.²⁹

I maintain that the *sensus communis* performs an analogous function in relation to aesthetic judgement, providing a logically inaccessible yet constitutive basis for our determinations of beauty and the sublime. The unconditioned that Lonergan discovers lying behind theoretical reason can be understood as a transcendental, viz., truth: an aspect of being on which rational judgements are founded. What we have seen in previous chapters is that in considering the generation of aesthetic judgement we arrive at what can be described in Lonergan's terms as another example of the unconditioned, but this time an unconditioned standard of beauty rather than truth. Aquinas, in his discussion of the transcendentals, comments that while they are 'identical fundamentally', they 'differ logically', and it is this logical distinction that we find in the unconditioned as it relates to theoretical reason versus aesthetic judgement.³⁰ Theoretical reason requires an interrogation of the nature of judgement as applied to concepts in order to generate the categories from the unconditioned. Similarly, an investigation of aesthetic judgement reveals an implicit dependence on a common sense — what Kant identifies as the 'supersensible substrate of humanity' — that allows our judgements of beauty and the sublime to have universal validity.³¹

What I am suggesting is that this common sense performs the same function as Lonergan's unconditioned, and that both can be understood in terms drawn from the

²⁹ Ibid., 672.

³⁰ Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologiae*, 1, q5, a4, ad1.

³¹ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 340.

doctrine of the transcendentals as different aspects of being. The unconditioned and the *sensus communis* are identical fundamentally — both represent that which determines the nature of judgement itself — but differ logically, with the unconditioned providing the rules of rational reflection used to generate the categories, and common sense giving a transcendent definition of purposiveness used to judge beauty and the sublime. Unlike Lonergan, however, I will not attempt to demonstrate that common sense, and the being of which it is an aspect, actually exist. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, I am sceptical of Lonergan's attempt to redefine what it means to have proven an idea. There can be a distinction between certain knowledge and logical proof, one that is important to maintain both for the sake of philosophical clarity and communicability. The idea of proof is generally limited to that which can be demonstrated logically. Although we must bear in mind Lonergan's caveat that logic itself is, by this definition, unprovable, I think it makes sense to use the term as it is broadly understood. Moreover, theological knowledge would seem possible — we can know, for example, that God exists and wishes to be in relation with us — quite apart from whether such knowledge can be demonstrated logically, in ontological or cosmological terms.

More importantly, however, cosmological demonstration is unnecessary. What I have argued is that music, considered from within a subjective philosophical perspective, functions as a signal of transcendence: that our perception of musical beauty is dependent on knowledge that is metaphysical and thus inaccessible to transcendental idealism. Lonergan's work on the transcendent conditions of rational understanding in a Kantian system shows that such knowledge can be related to a notion of being, and thus understood in terms of the transcendentals of truth and beauty. We cannot know that such metaphysical beauty does, in fact, exist, only that the way in which we perceive musical beauty, along with the structure of music itself, actively leads us to posit such a transcendent foundation, and thus opens musicological method to the consideration of theological knowledge. If we view our perception of music from within a specific theological perspective, however — one that holds that being does exist in reality and that God is identical with this being — we can not only understand the common sense of aesthetic judgement as grounded in God's being, but can investigate the implications of this statement in greater detail. It is this task that will occupy us for the remainder of this chapter.

4. Divine Being and Judgements of Beauty

4.1. Features of Aesthetic Judgements

Before we can understand the relationship between beauty and God's divine being, it will be helpful to consider once again the structure of aesthetic judgements in Kant's transcendental idealism. A judgement of beauty is fundamentally an awareness of formal purposiveness, reflecting the fact that an object appears *prima facie* as intelligible to our cognition. Objects we consider beautiful evince an order that suggests their dependence on some sort of purposeful organisation. The opposite of beauty is thus a kind of anarchic randomness, which utterly defies our attempts to give cognitive definition to the experience. Kant insists that judgements of beauty reflect an object's *formal* purposiveness, and not an awareness of any specific purpose or design. As such, beauty allows for the play of our cognitive powers; i.e., pleasure in the correspondence between the structure of our cognition and our perception of the world. Although beauty is to some extent the property of individual objects — insofar as they are intelligible — objects are beautiful because of their ability to lead us towards a consideration of the broader purposiveness of the world.³²

Consequently, human artistry for Kant is secondary in comparison with natural beauty, since it only suggests the purposiveness of other human minds and not necessarily of nature as a whole (or of nature as a whole in a subsidiary way as mediated by human consciousness). The purposiveness we discern in human creation implies the existence of a specific purpose lying behind this intelligibility, in the way that a watch implies the existence of a watchmaker. Although we do not have direct access into the thoughts and motivations of others — so that we cannot know, for example, precisely why or how Mozart wrote his Forty-First Symphony — we nevertheless have a general understanding of the way in which other humans think and create. More specifically, the intelligibility of human art — and thus its formal purposiveness — is simply a reflection of the structure of human cognition, something with which we are intimately acquainted. The perception of formal purposiveness in human art is thus partially a matter of self-deception; or, in more positive terms, involves an active complicity with the object's aesthetic aspirations. Because we know, at least in a general sense,

³²It is this emphasis on formal purposiveness, as opposed to specific purpose, that distinguishes beautiful objects from those that are merely intelligible. A cup of coffee is, on one level, purposive — its existence reflects the purposeful action of its maker — yet it is only beautiful if we consider its purposiveness apart from knowledge of this specific purpose. Thus, while it is in theory possible for a cup of coffee to appear beautiful, our awareness of its specific purpose largely subverts any sense of formal purposiveness.

the purpose or intellect behind works of human artistry, recognition of their mere formal purposiveness requires a determination to view the object as if we lacked knowledge of its specific purpose.

It is for this reason that Kant prefers natural beauty to human art: we must view art as natural — i.e., as evincing formal purposiveness without a specific purpose — if we are to recognise its beauty. Music, I have suggested, uses the purposiveness of nature in a unique way: as a means for contextualising the contrapurposiveness created within musical worlds. The play of our cognitive powers experienced in aesthetic judgements is made possible by this gap between the fact of nature's intelligibility and our inability to explain the correspondence between human cognition and the ordering of the world. While we can perceive an object's formal purposiveness directly — we can observe that objects in nature are ordered in a way that makes sense to our minds — we cannot know why this is the case, or from whence this intelligibility is derived. The inaccessibility of nature to explanation of its purposiveness almost inevitably leads to metaphysical speculation: just as, in the realm of human creation, an intelligible object like a watch implies the existence of a watchmaker, so, too, we are tempted to posit a conscious being as the source of the intelligibility we find in nature. Such an argument, however, is far from conclusive. Darwin's theory of evolution provides one example of how order can be generated through purely random variation, and thus cautions against attempts to demonstrate the necessary existence of an ultimate being in response to nature's formal purposiveness.

More importantly, Kant's point is that while we must assume the purposiveness of nature — an assumption confirmed empirically by our perception of natural beauty — our judgements of beauty do not depend on knowledge of the source of this purposiveness. Even more strongly than this, judgements of beauty are in fact impossible if we know the purpose behind our perception of formal purposiveness.³³ This is another example of Paul Guyer's insistence that Kant's apparent epistemological humility is often less humble than it appears.³⁴ We are not simply unable to discern the source of nature's intelligibility, but because our freedom to make independent judgements is actually predicated on this ignorance, we can know that such knowledge is impossible (at least in Kant's terms, within the limits of transcendental idealism).

³³ This same logic also applies to our knowledge of nature's ultimate teleological purpose, the highest good. We know that nature is oriented towards this ultimate good, and thus that our decisions should be likewise directed, but these actions could not be free if we knew precisely what the highest good is, or how it can be achieved.

³⁴ Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 333.

Thus, while we may naturally wonder about the source of the purposiveness we discern through natural beauty, knowledge of its source is not only irrelevant, but impossible if human freedom is to be preserved.

4.2. Discerning Purposiveness in God's Purposing

What I have argued, however, is that we cannot draw such a clear distinction between knowledge generated by the individual human mind and that which transcends the limitations of Kant's system and extends into the realm of the metaphysical. Like theoretical reason's generation of the categories, our perception of purposiveness is derived from an analysis of the nature of judgement itself, which cannot occur within transcendental idealism since it is constitutive for our cognition. We cannot identify purposiveness unless we already know what it is, yet we cannot simply posit knowledge of purposiveness as an a priori condition of cognition because it is generated from the nature of our human cognition as a whole. Moreover, if knowledge of purposiveness were innate, it would be impossible to *develop* our sense of taste. Kant recognises these difficulties, and posits the *sensus communis* as the supersensible substrate of humanity from which our ability to judge purposiveness is derived. In Lonergan's terms, our understanding of purposiveness is developed from the unconditioned, which forms a basis for our judicial faculty (with aesthetic determinations representing judgement in its pure form, unrelated to either theoretical or practical reason).

Interestingly, although Kant does not acknowledge the dependence of theoretical reason on a supersensible substrate, he does recognise its importance for our aesthetic judgements. Unlike Lonergan, however, Kant is unwilling to move directly from the necessity of a common sense to the dependence of our thought on God. Instead, the *sensus communis* is defined as a feature common to humanity, thus preserving the freedom of human thought from divine dictation. To avoid simply replacing one potentially determining standard with another — in the form of a common humanity to which we, as individuals, must all conform — Kant argues that this common sense does not exist independently of human cognition, but instead represents, in effect, the nature of the noumenal mind; what we might call an individual's human *being*. Judgements of beauty are subjective universals because although they are based on the noumenal constitution of the subject, each individual's human being is identical with all others. Because the human being possessed by two people is identical, although distinct, we may expect them to reach the same judgements of purposiveness. If they do not, such disagreement does not reflect differences in the human being on which

judgements of purposiveness are based, but instead indicates that the judgement of one or both was not, in fact, disinterested.

As I have indicated, all of this speculation about the nature and source of the *sensus communis* lies outside the purview of Kant's philosophical method, and is thus simply metaphysical conjecture. Consequently, it is possible to leave Kant behind at this point and offer our own metaphysical understanding of this common sense. Nevertheless, it is worth briefly considering the reasons behind Kant's speculation and the ramifications of his humanist approach. Christopher Insole suggests that the primary challenge for Kant is not how we can have knowledge of the world outside our minds, but instead how the freedom of human cognition can be preserved from divine determination; the problem is not mind-world, but mind-mind.³⁵ The underlying motivation of Kant's thought is a desire to avoid a situation in which a 'human being's actions... have their determining ground in something altogether beyond his control, namely in the causality of a supreme being which is distinct from him and upon which his own existence and the entire determination of his causality entirely depend'.³⁶ Accepting Insole's argument, we can see how many aspects of transcendental idealism reflect a belief that for human cognition to be free it must function independently of divine knowledge. Thus, our aesthetic judgements are not only unconcerned with the origin of the purposiveness perceived, but such knowledge is actively rejected. Similarly, the idea that the *sensus communis* is derived from a shared human nature, rather than pointing towards a divine standard of beauty, reflects this desire to keep human cognition utterly separated from the divine mind.

Connecting this common sense with theological knowledge, then, will require a re-evaluation of the nature of human freedom that acknowledges its existence within God's providential plan and knowledge, and does not insist on the kind of radical cognitive independence Kant advocates. It is not my intention to argue for any particular method of harmonising God's providence and human freedom, except to note that such an accommodation will be necessary if we are to relate aesthetic judgement to theological knowledge. This tension between freedom and determination is not, however, new to Christian theology, and, I would argue, does not pose a serious threat to theological knowledge. Thus, if we admit the possibility of an acceptable solution

³⁵Christopher J. Insole, 'Kant's Transcendental Idealism, Freedom and the Divine Mind', Unpublished Manuscript (2008).

³⁶Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 100-101; quoted in Insole, 'Kant's Transcendental Idealism, Freedom and the Divine Mind', 10.

we can safely conclude that there is no logical reason for Kant's insistence on the radical separation of the human and divine minds. Moreover, by connecting the *sensus communis* to something greater than an individual's human existence, we can avoid many of the problems raised by Kant's humanist approach.

In the first place, positing the dependence of an individual's human being on God's divine being removes the need for each person to have an identical noumenal constitution — at least insofar as our cognition is dependent on being — while simultaneously providing a basis for the shared elements of human cognition. A similar function could be performed by an independent idea of 'human being' or 'human nature', but not in a way that preserved the individual's transcendental freedom as it is defined by Kant. If human nature simply described the collection of individual human natures, using a Scotian understanding of universals, then it would lack the independent definition necessary to perform a normative function with respect to individual human natures. If, on the other hand, it was sufficiently substantive to be normative, 'human nature' would itself constitute a determining ground beyond the individual's control. Of course, I have argued that Kant's definition of human freedom is unreasonable, in which case it is possible that an idea of human nature could explain the correspondence between individual human beings without preventing their free action. In this case, however, it is difficult to see how a disembodied ideal of humanity would be preferable to the alternative I have suggested: that our perception of purposiveness and the universality of our aesthetic judgements are rooted in the nature of God's divine being.

This idea also makes sense of our experience of the unconditioned as a *ground*. A sense that our consciousness is grounded in something beyond our individual existence is a common element in theological responses to Kant's strident subjectivity. Friedrich Schleiermacher is the first to suggest that our idea of religion is based on a 'feeling of absolute dependence': a sense of contingency not demonstrated logically but experienced directly as a dependence on an ultimate ground.³⁷ Similarly, Rahner speaks of the infinite horizon as leading to 'the basic and original experience of creatureliness... a transcendental experience in which the subject along with his time itself is experienced as being borne by an incomprehensible ground'.³⁸ Lonergan, too, argues with respect to theoretical reason that we experience the structure of reason as an immutable given; as something that comes before and thoroughly infuses cognition.

³⁷Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (T&T Clark, 1999), 132.

³⁸Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 54.

A similar sense of grounding can also be discerned in our aesthetic judgements. Kant distinguishes judgements of beauty from mere expressions of preference by emphasising their disinterestedness and consequent universality. Judgements of beauty are statements of fact, but although they reflect the formal intelligibility of an object, this purposiveness is perceived directly as pleasure. Beauty thus depends to a large extent on the constitution of the subject; it answers the question, 'Does this object appear intelligible *to me?*' Yet despite the fundamental subjectivity of our aesthetic judgements, we nevertheless expect them to be universally valid: they are statements of fact rather than mere opinion. I have argued that we cannot logically understand how this can be the case without positing a common sense that functions as an unconditioned ground not only for our individual judgements, but all judgements of beauty.

The unconditioned in Lonergan's discussion of theoretical reason functions generatively, so that once the categories are established it is no longer directly necessary for cognition. The unconditioned offers 'proof' of God's existence, but only if we seek it out.³⁹ The *sensus communis*, however, is *experienced directly* as the ground of *every* aesthetic judgement, and in turn of every judgement of purposiveness. We must believe that the pleasures of beautiful objects are not simply reactions to *appearances* of formal purposiveness, but to its reality. It is of course possible to maintain a sceptical position, and argue that although we believe the purposiveness of nature to exist noumenally, we cannot know that this is, in fact, the case. If nature is not actually purposive, however, then not only is our perception of purposiveness, through natural beauty, delusional, but so is any thought that our cognition can be reliably used to interpret phenomena. The idea of a common sense that provides a reliable foundation for the cognition of natural purposiveness — a purposiveness that is not the product of human minds — as well as ensuring the universal validity of our aesthetic judgements, is a signal of transcendence: it is a belief on which our experience of the world is implicitly dependent.

As Lonergan would be quick to point out, the apparent logical necessity of such a common sense is not proof that one actually exists; proof is dependent on an experience of the unconditioned itself, something I argue forms the ground of all aesthetic judgements. Whether or not such experience is accepted as proof, by viewing the *sensus communis* as dependent on God's divine being we can explain both our sense of the

³⁹ Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 672.

‘groundedness’ of aesthetic judgements, as well as the strong association of religion with aesthetics. Aesthetic judgements are dependent on an understanding of purposiveness; one that is not fixed as the categories are, but is drawn from a common sense that ensures the validity of our aesthetic judgements and enables us to discern purposiveness in objects — like nature — that have been ordered by something other than a human mind. Thus, this common sense, as well as relating to our individual minds, must also reflect the source of nature’s intelligibility. Assuming a theological perspective, we can identify this source as God, who both creates and sustains the world. In judging the intelligibility (beauty) of nature, then, we become aware of the purposiveness infused into creation by its creator: *judgements of beauty reflect our wonder at God’s ordering and purposing of the world.*

This understanding of aesthetic judgement helps to make sense of the sublime, where purposiveness is discerned *despite* the unintelligibility of the object. If the *sensus communis* reflects merely our individual being, or even a collective human nature, then it is difficult to see how judgements of the sublime could ever be held to have universal validity except perhaps in a theoretical sense. The sublime is contrapurposive, meaning that we judge it to be purposive even though it gives no appearance of being ordered. There is consequently no rational or cognitive basis from which we can judge sublimity, only a sense that the chaotic is somehow intelligible. While it is theoretically possible that we would all experience this vague sense of intelligibility when confronted with the sublime, Kant provides no reason why we should expect this to be the case (in contrast with judgements of beauty, in which the intelligibility of the object can be compared with our understanding of purposiveness). If, however, this standard of purposiveness is not simply human but ultimately divine, then judgements of sublimity are possible because our standard of purposiveness is derived from the intent of the one who created the sublime. Music’s internal sublimity demonstrates this principle in microcosm: what defies explanation within the music’s artistic world becomes intelligible when viewed from without. Even though the sublime appears to thwart all attempts at understanding, the dependence of aesthetic judgement on a common sense rooted in God’s being allows for the possibility that our awareness of purposiveness might be extended beyond the ordinary horizon of knowledge to include an understanding that makes the contrapurposive sublime nevertheless seem, in some unfathomable sense, intelligible.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ An alternative would be to say that because the world is ordered by God, we can know that it is purposive, thus allowing us to trust that instances of the sublime are likewise purposive, despite appearances.

4.3. A Relational Understanding of Music's Theological Significance

In this chapter I have argued that, within a theological perspective, it is the purposiveness of God as creator and sustainer of the world that serves as an objective basis for aesthetic judgement; that God provides an unconditioned ground from which we generate the understanding of purposiveness used to appreciate beauty. Lonergan defines being as something intrinsically intelligible, so that 'the idea of being is the idea of the total range of intelligibility'.⁴¹ In the first instance, we judge purposiveness by extrapolating from the intelligibility of our being (and, as a consequence, of those things we create) to objects we have not made, particularly objects of nature. We do not have access to the total range of intelligibility — hence our confusion at the sublime — yet we do have an unlimited desire to understand the order and purpose of creation. This unlimited desire makes us aware of an horizon that is contained within God's infinite being. Our understanding of nature's purposiveness is limited, but our awareness of its formal purposiveness is grounded in God's perfect ordering of the universe. It is this knowledge — that the world is purposive — that permits us to judge the contrapurposive as sublime.

What is particularly interesting is that although God's purpose provides a ground for aesthetic judgements — in that it gives both creation in general, and our individual human beings specifically, intelligibility — it does not determine whether we find a particular object or experience beautiful. We are given sufficient knowledge to judge the purposiveness of the beautiful and of the sublime from the intelligibility of our own constitution and our awareness of God's providence. Yet it is the ultimate inaccessibility of God's purposes, and the limitation of our finite intelligibility as human beings, that allows us to take pleasure from the play of our cognitive powers. The world appears beautiful because so much of it, despite evincing formal purposiveness, defies our attempts at rationalisation, whether in terms of formal or final cause. Our ignorance of God's plan gives us the freedom to see the formal purposiveness of nature as beautiful, yet it is our dependence on his providence that ensures our perception of his creation as purposive.

Aquinas defines beauty as having three characteristics: integrity or perfection, proportion or consonance, and brightness or clarity.⁴² This last element reflects the fact that 'a certain splendour is indeed according to all the Ancients the essential character

⁴¹ Ibid., 643.

⁴² Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologiae*, 1, q39, a8.

of beauty... [it is] a splendour of intelligibility: *splendor veri*, said the Platonists, *splendor ordinis*, said St. Augustine... *splendor formae* said St. Thomas'.⁴³ In the terms of this discussion, we experience this splendour of order or form when we judge an object to be purposive, yet cannot identify its purpose. Natural beauty reveals a surplus of intelligibility, which human art seeks to recreate. It is the splendour of this excess that confirms the intelligibility of creation — and thus our mind's ability to understand it cognitively — while leading to the pleasure of aesthetic judgement. Beauty would be impossible without the freedom to judge independently of God's being, yet neither could it exist if individual human being were not related to God's ultimate being analogously through his purposes expressed in creation.

The beautiful appears purposive to us, yet its purpose remains obscured; it is precisely this disparity between intelligibility and knowledge that allows for the 'freedom of our cognitive powers', not only in the sense of cognitive play, but also the freedom to make cognitive judgements independently of God's determining purpose. It is what Lonergan refers to as the distinction between an unlimited desire to know and a limited capacity for knowledge.⁴⁴ God is the supreme beauty because he is ultimately purposive — having created and sustained the universe — while remaining fundamentally inscrutable.⁴⁵ God transcends all possible knowledge, yet he is also immanently present within all knowledge as the author of the world in which we know. God's beauty thus consists in precisely this tension between purposiveness and purpose, intelligibility and knowledge; immanence and transcendence. Natural beauty testifies directly to these tensions, while the beauty of human creation points to the analogy of being that allows us to create objects that reflect the intelligibility of God's creation. Understanding God as beauty is another example of a second-order description: God is defined not in his essence but in his relation to us. God is beauty not because beauty is an independent quality possessed within God's being, but because God's relationship with us and creation is supremely purposive, yet beyond our ability to comprehend.

This raises the somewhat tangential but nevertheless interesting question of whether God can himself appreciate beauty. On the one hand, it would seem that, like an artist admiring his own work, God should be able to view the beauty of his crea-

⁴³Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (London: Sheed & Ward, 1946), 20.

⁴⁴ Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 643.

⁴⁵As Paul writes to the Romans: 'O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!' (11:33).

tion by limiting his awareness of the purposes behind its construction. On the other hand, however, all human creation is undertaken in the context of God's beauty in relation to us and thus reflects the splendour of excess intelligibility. Kant talks about the importance of genius in the creation of human art: the idea that in creating truly great art the artist is not conscious of his actions but serves as a conduit for the purposiveness of nature. When an artist admires his work, then, there is an element of the unexplainable splendour of nature's purposiveness, derived from God's providential care for creation, that hides some aspects of the artwork's purpose even from its creator. Does God take pleasure in the unconditioned intelligibility of his being? Can he wonder at his own purposiveness?

The answers to these questions, which would require first-order knowledge of God's essence, are beyond our ability to determine. This discussion, however, does suggest another way of understanding how human artistry participates in God's creation without simply being imitative. Trevor Hart argues that creativity 'is not only a proper response to, but also an active sharing in (albeit in a distinct and entirely subordinate creaturely mode) God's own creative activity within the cosmos'.⁴⁶ While Hart discusses this sharing in general, moral terms, this analysis of aesthetic judgement highlights the ways in which human artistry is truly dependent on God's purposed activity to provide the splendour of intelligibility towards which art points. For us to appreciate the beauty of human creations, we must view them as natural, not by forgetting their human origin, but by using their purposiveness to direct our contemplation towards the wondrous, inexplicable purposiveness of God's creation.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

The idea that human art can direct our understanding towards contemplation of divine providence features strongly in Augustine's *De musica*, the earliest extended discussion of music in Christian thought. Augustine is adamant that music (and art more generally) can only be appreciated when perceived with an orientation towards God, since it is God who provides the standards of equality and perfection that allow us to judge our aesthetic reactions. The difficulty of remaining focused on the true beauty of God is caused by pride, 'Through which vice the soul chose to imitate God rather than to serve him'.⁴⁷ In the terms of this discussion, we lose sight of the fact that our purposiveness is

⁴⁶ Trevor Hart, 'Theology Through the Arts: Hearing, Seeing and Touching the Truth', in *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation Through the Arts*, ed. J. Begbie (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 18.

⁴⁷ Augustine *De musica*, 6.13.39.

dependent on the purposes of God, leading to the mistaken impression that we create art according to our own devices alone. By severing the connection with God, however, we are actually left incapable of exercising correct judgement at any level, and ‘the just consequence is that those who through their pride wished to surpass the others are not able to rule even over their own parts and bodies’.⁴⁸

If pride is the cause of our alienation from God, even in our appreciation of music, then the antidote to this separation is ‘that we should love our God and Lord with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and love our neighbour as ourselves’. In practical terms, this means we must ‘direct all these movements [of the soul] and rhythms of our human activity to this end’.⁴⁹ We are not called to denounce the material world, or its capacity to imitate true beauty, as the Gnostics or some Neoplatonists would have advocated. Instead, we are actually meant to use temporal means to develop our relationship with God. Musical structures ‘are a creation of divine providence, as they are beautiful in their own kind’, and we will be rid of our misplaced love for them, ‘Not by throwing them away as a burden, nor by embracing them as something well anchored, but by using them well’.⁵⁰ When we use music for our own ends, determined by pride, we become enslaved to it, for we lack the capacity to judge. It is through love of God and neighbour, then, that we may actually gain control over our perceptions and emotions, and no longer be subject to them. This process of reorientation, ‘Whereby the soul with the help of its God and Lord draws itself away from the love of an inferior beauty by fighting down and killing its own habit’, in turn promotes in us the virtues of temperance, fortitude, and justice.⁵¹ Just as we can allow music and number to pull our gaze away from God, we can also use the music present throughout the world to aide our spiritual ascent.

Augustine’s language, and indeed, his philosophical world-view, are far removed from our discussion of aesthetic judgement in Kant’s critical philosophy. Even so, the devotional implications of the connection he discerns between appreciation of music and knowledge of God apply equally well to ideas of purposiveness and being. The splendour of human art, like that of natural beauty, reflects the pervasive abundance of purposiveness throughout God’s creation. Through aesthetic judgements we become aware of both the intelligibility of nature — which allows for human cognition —

⁴⁸ Ibid., 6.13.41.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 6.14.43.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 6.14.46.

⁵¹ Ibid., 6.15.50.

and also the hiddenness of God's purposes (both teleological and formal), which permits the free exercise of human judgement. If we lose sight of the connection between aesthetic judgement and God's being, and proudly maintain that aesthetic judgements are solely the product of our individual cognition, then our determinations of beauty are no longer universally valid, we have no basis for claims of sublimity or natural purposiveness, and we become unable to appreciate the splendour of artistic beauty as it relates to the purposiveness of nature and the purposes of God. Kant partially acknowledges such negative consequences by arguing for the dependence of our aesthetic judgements on a metaphysical principle, the *sensus communis*. Purposiveness cannot be derived entirely from an individual's mind, lest judgements of beauty degenerate into mere expressions of preference.

On the other hand, if we do listen to music with an orientation towards God, relishing the splendour of purposiveness, we can deepen our awareness of the connection between God and his creation, and our appreciation of his providence. Music, I have argued, is particularly capable of directing us towards this theological reflection for a number of reasons:

1. it resists conceptual determination, thereby promoting an awareness of formal purposiveness;
2. it is a free beauty, philosophically independent of natural beauty and yet subsequent to it, thus leading us to recognise the formal purposiveness of nature;
3. its structure actively thwarts the identification of specific formal purpose, which, when coupled with its temporality, seems to create the contrapurposiveness of the sublime within its own artistic world;
4. this perception of music as sublime promotes an intense emotional involvement as well as directing us to consider how we can judge the contrapurposive to be, on some inaccessible level, intelligible.

Thus, music simultaneously makes us aware of both the formal purposiveness of creation and the limitations of human understanding, establishing a tension between purposiveness and purpose, intelligibility and knowledge, that characterises aesthetic experience rooted in contemplation of God's being. Our appreciation of music thus functions as a signal of transcendence in two respects: in the dependence of our aesthetic judgements on a common sense derived from God's ultimate beauty, and in the ways through which music draws our attention towards this dependence, and our more general dependence on God's providence.

As I have repeatedly taken pains to make clear, such theological conclusions do not logically follow from a Kantian aesthetic. Instead, what we have shown is that the nature of aesthetic judgement in transcendental idealism — which shares the subjective epistemological orientation of much contemporary thought — is implicitly dependent on some sort of metaphysical principle, since judgements of purposiveness require the interrogation of the nature and source of judgement itself; a task our cognition is unable to perform. The precise nature of this metaphysical standard — whether it is grounded in God's being, or some idealist conception of humanity — is by definition beyond the competence of Kant's philosophical system. What is important is that the dependence of aesthetic judgements on a metaphysical standard allows us to understand music's theological significance in a way that remains consistent with an epistemology in which knowledge is constructed by individual human minds.

4. Summary

In this chapter, we have seen that it is possible to understand the relevance of theology within a subjective epistemological system without simply altering the fundamental principles of human-mind-dependent knowledge, but by instead interrogating instances of implicit dependence on metaphysical knowledge within such systems. With respect to transcendental idealism, Lonergan argues that the categories of theoretical reason offer one example of knowledge that must be generated from the unconditioned aspects of cognition, and cannot simply be assumed *a priori*. The common sense on which aesthetic judgements depend is, I argued, similarly generated from the unconditioned, and thus can only be known through metaphysical investigation. The task for theology, then, is to provide an understanding of the basis for this universal standard of beauty. Here, Lonergan's theory of being as an unrestricted act of knowing is helpful. When combined with Kant's view that aesthetic judgements represent the perception of purposiveness, but without the identification of any specific purpose, beauty can be understood as precisely the relationship between our unrestricted desire to know — which implies the purposiveness of creation — and God's unrestricted ability to comprehend natural purposiveness, as the author and orderer of creation.

Beauty thus reflects our wonder at God's purposing of the world, a wonder that would be impossible if we either lacked the desire to know or had specific knowledge of God's ultimate purposes. Such a theological understanding, I suggested, is not only appropriate, but in many ways preferable to naturalistic or humanist alternatives, even though we cannot prove that a theological approach is correct, only that it is possible

and, perhaps, more sensible. If we accept a theological perspective, however, we can understand beauty as an awareness of the tension between the transcendence of God's supreme creativity and our limited capacity to understand a creation that is nevertheless thoroughly intelligible. By accepting the limitations of our knowledge we can experience the joy of intelligibility, the free 'play of our cognitive powers', and the beauty of God's creation.

6

Conclusion

1. The Nature of the Problem

At the beginning of this thesis, we set out to investigate the sense that music is in some way ‘theologically loaded’: that music has an intrinsic and somehow unique capacity for religious import.¹ Taking inspiration from the epistemological approach found in the earliest Christian treatise on music — Augustine’s *De musica* — we refined our task to focus on whether our perception of music can be understood as reflecting an intrinsic dependence on knowledge of God. Analysing musical perception, Augustine observes that although musical performances are inherently imperfect, we are nevertheless able to both discern these imperfections and judge the music on the basis of a perfect, mental reconstruction of how the music should sound. We cannot have formulated this ideal representation on the basis of the imperfect performance, which means that our understanding of music must be derived from some higher source of perfect knowledge, a source that is, in turn, identified with God. Although Augustine’s argument is extremely interesting and, in many ways, beguiling, it relies on the Neoplatonic idea that there are degrees of being or perfection. I have argued that this Neoplatonic metaphysic, while not necessarily incorrect, is at odds with the epistemological features characteristic of modern thought, and thus, on a practical level, of limited contemporary use.

Our challenge, then, has been to discover a connection between musical perception and theological knowledge that is consistent the modern view of humans as ‘subjects

¹ Jeremy S. Begbie, *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (London: SPCK, 2007), 17.

who interact with the world of objects... thereby regulating both themselves and the world around them'.² The defining feature of modern epistemological theories is their emphasis on the construction of knowledge by the human subject, as opposed to Augustine's belief that truth and perfection reside beyond human cognition in the divine mind. The first person to develop a fully subjective system is Immanuel Kant, who likens his assertion that objects conform to human thought, rather than thought to the nature of objects, to the radical perspectival shift brought about by the Copernican revolution.³ For Kant, knowledge is not only dependent on human thought, but is limited to that which can be determined, by the individual human mind, to either be necessary for cognition or the product of empirical observation. So, for example, the idea that the natural world functions in a way that is intelligible to our cognition must be assumed a priori if we are to gain knowledge empirically. At the same time, however, although we must assume that nature is intelligible — or, to use Kant's term, purposive — we do not need to know whether this intelligibility has any particular source. Consequently, explanations of nature's purposiveness fall into the realm of metaphysics: knowledge that cannot be induced directly from the fact of cognition, and thus lacking epistemological certainty in a system where knowledge is constructed by the individual human mind.

In Kant's transcendental idealism, the individual human mind becomes the ultimate arbiter of knowledge. A similar sense that epistemological claims must answer to an individual's cognition can also be identified in postmodern thought. While, as Alastair Williams notes, postmodernism questions 'whether the subject can really understand the world and itself so transparently, and enquir[es] whether universal values represent the values of the powerful imposed on the less powerful', it retains a strong sense that universal claims unable to be induced from the fact of an individual's cognition are epistemologically suspect.⁴ Rather than representing a fundamental re-evaluation of Kant's subjective epistemology, then, postmodernism highlights the persistence of what, on Kant's account, qualify as unjustifiable metaphysical claims or 'metanarratives'. On a basic epistemological level, both postmodernism and transcendental idealism present the same understanding of knowledge as individual-human-mind-dependent. Consequently, I have argued that Kant's aesthetic theory provides a useful tool for analysing whether music can be understood as dependent on theologi-

² Alastair Williams, *Constructing Musicology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2001), x.

³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), Bxvi.

⁴ Williams, *Constructing Musicology*, x.

cal knowledge in a way that is consistent with contemporary thought. Because Kant's epistemological claims are especially stringent and well-defined, a demonstration that such theological dependence is possible even within a Kantian system would be particularly compelling.

Kant's attitude towards metaphysics poses a significant challenge to theological discourse, and to any attempt to understand music's theological significance in a way that is consistent with contemporary epistemological claims. In the first place, because God cannot be identified empirically or comprehended within the human mind, it is unclear whether we can construct meaningful theological knowledge. As we discussed in the previous chapter, most solutions to this problem of God-talk have either denied the force of transcendental idealism (realism), or altered the Kantian distinction between our perception of objects as phenomena, and their inaccessible, noumenal existence (Transcendental Thomists and Nicholas Wolterstorff). The problem with both of these approaches, correct though they may be, is that once again they establish philosophical systems at variance with basic features of contemporary epistemological thought: principally, the idea that objects conform to our thought; that, in Jeremy Begbie's words, we construct rather than discover knowledge.⁵

In contrast, I have suggested that we can understand theological discourse in a way that preserves the limitations of Kant's epistemological claims by combining Gordon Kaufman's thesis that theology studies ideas about God with George Lindbeck's insistence that theological discourse requires the assumption of a particular faith perspective. When we claim to study God, we are not, in fact, investigating the nature of God directly, but rather thinking about theological ideas. Such reflection, however, occurs within a perspective of faith, which gives our ideas about God the status of revelation, and thus a connection, through faith, to God's ineffable nature. This assumed faith perspective also provides normative constraints on theological speculation. I have not, however, argued that this Kaufman-Lindbeck approach does in fact describe how theological discourse functions, only that it offers a means of understanding God-talk that is consistent with Kant's epistemological claims while avoiding the disciplinary fragmentation inevitable from following Kaufman's account alone.

Assuming that either this theory of theological discourse or some other approach can establish the basic possibility of meaningful theological knowledge, we must still explain how theological knowledge can be relevant to our understanding of music in a

⁵ Begbie, *Resounding Truth*, 239.

human-mind-dependent epistemology. This question has occupied the majority of this thesis, and has been addressed on two different levels: through an analysis of Kant's aesthetic theory, and through the application of Kant's analysis of beauty to music. To explain the universality of aesthetic judgements, Kant posits the existence of a normative common sense, the content of which belongs to the realm of metaphysical knowledge. Unlike the purposes behind nature's purposiveness, however, the content of this *sensus communis* is directly relevant to our aesthetic judgements, operating constitutively in our identifications of beauty, and thus representing an instance in which metaphysical knowledge is directly relevant within Kant's subjective epistemology. At the same time, I have argued that the features of musical beauty make our perception of music particularly dependent on this common sense, thus contributing to the sense that music, specifically, is theologically loaded. Before considering the implications of these ideas for both musicological and theological discourse, it will be helpful to summarise the substance of our investigations in greater detail; briefly restating our conclusions regarding the nature of musical beauty, its association with religious experience, and its function within a Christian understanding of Kant's *sensus communis*. We will first consider the relationship between aesthetic judgements and theological knowledge, before looking more specifically at the theological significance of music.

2. Aesthetic Judgements and Theological Knowledge

2.1. Beauty in Kant

In the first chapter, we saw that beauty for Kant is primarily a matter of perceiving objects' formal purposiveness.⁶ We take pleasure in objects that appear, in the mere perceiving, to be intelligible, while we dislike objects or experiences that seem chaotic or random. Kant distinguishes between purposiveness, which is this perception of intelligibility, and awareness of a specific purpose or cause behind an object's intelligible structure. Purposiveness can thus imply both a formal cause and a moral end: objects can be structured in terms of their physical or cognitive form, or through their activity in the world. Kicking a football into the goal has a formal purpose — the transmission of energy from the footballer's foot into the ball, the interaction between physical laws of motion, gravity, friction, etc. — and a teleological explanation: the desire to score a goal. Even so, the motion of the football through the air would still appear

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), 236.

purposive, i.e. intelligible, even if we did not know why it had been kicked, or how it is that footballs move.

The perception of purposiveness is related to our other cognitive faculties — theoretical understanding and moral reasoning — because it provides empirical evidence of the correspondence between our cognition and the natural world.⁷ The fact that nature appears intelligible suggests that the processes by which we understand and act within it are reliable. As the primary role of judgement within Kant's philosophical system is to mediate between these other cognitive faculties and the external world, the perception of nature's formal purposiveness provides fundamental confirmation that such mediation is possible. Such an awareness, Kant argues, is the basis for aesthetic judgement, which consequently represents judgement in its pure form, unrelated to either conceptual understanding or moral action: in aesthetic judgement, we are aware of objects' mere formal purposiveness.⁸ To maintain this independence from theoretical and practical reason, in aesthetic judgement we must perceive this formal purposiveness without becoming aware of any specific source of purpose. This is difficult, because we naturally seek to understand and thus conceptualise our perception of purposiveness. Aesthetic judgements lead to a state of cognitive play, in which an object's purposiveness encourages us to discover its purpose, which nevertheless remains hidden.⁹ In cognitive play we are aware of judgement and its relation to our other cognitive faculties without these being able to determine our thought through the imposition of specific content.

Kant draws a distinction between judgements of beauty and those of the sublime. With beauty, we perceive an object's purposiveness directly, so that intelligibility can be thought of as a property of the object itself as well as the result of a subjective judgement. As the example of the football shows, we can be aware that an object is intelligible without understanding why this is the case. Likewise, beautiful objects appear purposive, yet resist attempts to define this intelligibility according to specific conceptual ideas. The Scholastic notion that beauty possesses a certain splendour is helpful for understanding the distinction between limited concepts of purpose and a comprehensive purpose that can fully account for an object's intelligibility. Beautiful objects present what we could term a surplus of intelligibility — what the Scholastics

⁷ Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester University Press, 1990), 24.

⁸ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 193.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 222.

would call splendour — that prevents us from fully explaining their purposiveness conceptually. Even though we can understand in physical terms the source of a beautiful sunset, optics seems insufficient to give a full account of the purposiveness we perceive: the sunset possesses a splendour surplus to simple physical explanations. Although Kant does not use the Scholastic language of splendour, he nevertheless argues that our experience of the natural world is typified by an awareness of a purposiveness that defies conceptual definition; this, when recognised, is perceived aesthetically as beauty.

In addition to beauty — where we perceive an object's purposiveness directly, but without becoming conscious of any specific, comprehensive explanation — Kant also suggests that there are times when we perceive an object or experience as purposive, even though it provides no objective basis from which to draw such a conclusion. In this case, we judge an object to be contrapurposive; i.e., as being intentionally constructed in a way that prevents us from perceiving its intelligibility, and thus purposive but in a way that defies our perception.¹⁰ Contrapurposiveness is a marker of the sublime, which unlike beauty, is fundamentally unbounded.¹¹ To perceive an object as intelligible we must consider it in its entirety, since something that appears purposive in part may not be in its totality. The sublime operates from the principle that an unbounded object's lack of intelligibility would appear purposive if we had access to it in its entirety. Objects and experiences can be unbounded either in a philosophically absolute sense — i.e., inherently surpassing the limitations of human cognition — or temporally. This first type of unboundedness is stronger than the latter, and characterises most of our experiences of the sublime in nature. A raging storm or Alpine precipice is so much greater than our ability to comprehend that we cannot begin to fathom its intelligibility; instead, we simply judge such objects to be intelligible, despite our lack of comprehension. This judgement colours our perception of the sublime, transforming what would otherwise be terrifying situations into experiences of awe and wonder.

Importantly, however, judgements of the sublime are entirely subjective, and are not supported by the characteristics of the object.¹² This raises a problem, for how are we meant to distinguish between that which is sublime, and that which is simply meaningless as well as incomprehensible? The answer is that our judgements of the sublime rely

¹⁰ Ibid., 245.

¹¹ Ibid., 244.

¹² Ibid., 245.

on what Kant calls the *sensus communis*, or common sense, which represents the ‘supersensible substrate of humanity’ — in other words, the unconditioned character of human cognition — and enables us to make judgements of the sublime.¹³ Common sense also plays a less obvious yet still vital role in beauty, ensuring that our judgements of the beautiful, though subjective, are nevertheless universally valid, something that distinguishes aesthetic judgements from mere expressions of preference. Without this common sense we are unable to consistently recognise the sublime, and we have no basis for assuming the universal validity of our aesthetic judgements.

What Kant does not appreciate, however, is that this *sensus communis* is not simply another a priori principle that, although strictly metaphysical — i.e., encompassing knowledge that cannot be substantiated within our subjective cognition alone — can nevertheless be safely ignored once assumed. Instead, I have argued that Kant’s metaphysical common sense is not merely regulative as an a priori condition of cognition, but actively shapes our cognition of aesthetic objects. The *sensus communis* allows for the possibility of universal validity and judgements of the sublime *by directly influencing those judgements* within our cognition. Particularly in the case of the sublime, we can distinguish sublimity from simple unintelligibility only through our dependence on a metaphysical principle that provides a comprehensive understanding of purposiveness. In terms drawn from Bernard Lonergan’s discussion of the Kantian categories, the idea of purposiveness by which we make aesthetic judgements does not exist in our cognition *ab initio*, but must be generated from the unconditioned realm that precedes our cognition.¹⁴ Kant recognises this in defining the *sensus communis* as the ‘supersensible substrate of humanity’. What he overlooks, however, is that because such a realm is prior to our cognition, we cannot, in fact, know that it *is* the supersensible substrate of humanity; such a definition moves beyond the limits of Kant’s epistemology into the area of metaphysical speculation. Thus there exists a metaphysical principle of uncertain nature and origin that must be relied upon to generate the understanding of purposiveness operative within our cognition, and by which we make aesthetic judgements.

The constitutive action of this metaphysical common sense, I have argued, provides a point of connection between Kant’s subjective epistemology and theology’s metaphysical content in which theological knowledge is given the potential to be directly

¹³ Ibid., 340.

¹⁴ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Longmans, 1961), 641.

relevant to our subjective cognition. Consequently, aesthetic judgement functions as a signal of transcendence, pointing by its very nature towards metaphysical knowledge. Moreover, because judgement itself can contain no conceptual content, our understanding of purposiveness is not, like the categories of understanding, generated once and subsequently accessed within cognition, but must be formed from the *sensus communis* de novo for each aesthetic judgement. Thus, in every judgement of the beautiful or the sublime we are not only led to contemplate the metaphysical basis for our sense of purposiveness, but must actively engage with this common sense directly.

2.2. Theological Interpretation

Although this engagement occurs on a non-conceptual level in every aesthetic judgement, if we wish to have a conceptual understanding of this common sense we must assume a particular metaphysical position, since we cannot investigate metaphysical questions within Kant's subjective epistemology. This assumed perspective need not be theological: Kant, in his discussion of the *sensus communis*, believes it can be understood as the 'supersensible substrate of humanity'. What I have questioned, however, is whether such a limited view is actually the most plausible. For a metaphysical understanding of human nature to perform the kind of constitutive role it occupies in aesthetic judgement it must have sufficient substance and independence to be normative for our cognition. A Scotian universal, which is a mere extrapolation and thus lacks the reality of the individual elements it categorises, would be ineffective at *directing* our cognition. While a stronger, more Platonic idea of human nature could theoretically solve this problem, it seems odd to suggest that an ideal humanity would exist independently in a universe without a God. A theological approach to Kant's common sense is thus not only permissible, but, I would maintain, intuitively preferable to a humanist alternative.

In chapter five, then, we developed a Christian understanding of musical beauty using its dependence on this common sense as a means of connecting aesthetic judgements of music with theological knowledge. In Scholastic thought, beauty, truth and goodness are all understood as transcendentals: ideas that transcend the individual Aristotelian categories and apply to the nature of being itself. When we judge an object to be good or beautiful, we are not identifying an isolated characteristic, but are making a determination of the object as a whole on the basis of its being. Beauty and the other transcendentals are consequently identified with being, and represent it as viewed from different perspectives. In judging goodness, we view an object's being in

relation to its purpose; with beauty, we judge the pleasure had in its mere perception. Being and its attendant transcendentals are fundamentally rooted in the character and existence of God, 'In whom we live and move and have our being'.¹⁵ God's being thus provides precisely the type of metaphysical standard of beauty we need to function as a common sense.

The difficulty with using the transcendentals in their Scholastic formulation is that it is unclear how we can have knowledge of God while defining him in our subjective terms. Thomas Aquinas attempts to solve this problem by arguing that descriptions of God apply analogously: when we say God is beautiful, we do not mean to confine his essence to our human understanding of beauty, but at the same time divine beauty is not wholly unrelated to that which we judge to be beautiful.¹⁶ The problem with this answer, as Duns Scotus points out, is that it is impossible to know that divine beauty is like human beauty without knowing to what extent.¹⁷ If we do not know the correspondence between divine and human beauty, then saying that God is beautiful is meaningless; on the other hand, if we do know in what ways our human understanding of beauty is deficient, it is no longer so and thus can provide knowledge of the divine essence. Scotus's solution to this problem is to suggest that universals, such as being, have less reality than the individual objects which they categorise, and that their primary function is taxonomic. Thus, when we say that both God and humans are beings, we do not define how God and humans are alike, but only note that they can be collected under a single noun. Being signifies the fact of a relationship between God and humanity, not the nature of that relationship.

I have suggested that a similar conclusion can be drawn about the relationship between theological knowledge and the *sensus communis* known through our experience of aesthetic judgement. Within the context of Christian revelation, we know that there is a relationship between God and humanity — what is signified by Scotus's understanding of being — and moreover that this relationship is one of creator and creation. As a consequence, we are a part of the purposiveness of creation set out by its creator, and it is our incorporation into God's ultimate purposes that allows us to judge the purposiveness of his creation. Even so, although we know ourselves and our world to be intelligently ordered, we cannot always comprehend the precise nature of God's purposes; we know that there is a purpose, but not how it is to be enacted, or

¹⁵ Acts 17:28.

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologiae*, 1, q13, a5.

¹⁷ Duns Scotus *Ordinatio*, 1, d3, 3a

what impact it will have on the details of our creaturely existence. What I have argued, then, is that beauty is precisely the recognition of this epistemological distance between creator and creation. We know the world to be purposive, which the generation of our minds by its creator allows us to confirm, yet we cannot identify its purpose. This ignorance of God's purposes, however, is not something negative, but instead allows us to revel in the wonder of his creation. Judgements of beauty thus reflect this wonder at God's ordering and purposing of the world.

3. Theological Significance of Music

3.1. Musical Beauty

While we have demonstrated the possibility that theological knowledge is directly relevant to our judgements within Kant's human-mind-dependent epistemology, we have not, in doing this, determined why music, in particular, seems theologically loaded. To understand how the dependence of aesthetic judgements on a metaphysical common sense affects our perception of music, we must analyse musical beauty, once again using Kantian aesthetics as an analytical tool. Here, a Kantian approach is appropriate for two reasons. In the first place, Kant's analysis of beauty is epistemological — judgements of beauty form a type of knowledge of integral importance to the rest of cognition — and thus provides a useful means for exploring the potential relationship between music and theological knowledge. More importantly, a Kantian approach is able to generate conclusions with compelling implications for further research, as will be discussed in the following section.

For Kant, the problem with human art is that it is difficult to see how it can appear purposive to us without also having an obvious purpose. Human creations are inherently intelligible, and proceed from thoughts and motivations that are familiar to us and easily discerned. Yet they nevertheless continue to evince the kind of splendour or surplus of purposiveness that characterises the beauty of nature. Kant offers two related explanations for the beauty of human art. In the first place, he argues that art is the work of genius, which acts as a conduit for the purposiveness of nature.¹⁸ The artist does not create art according to his own conscious thoughts and motivations alone, but also, in a sense, channels the splendour of natural beauty. Art is thus able to transcend the purposes of its human creator and display the surplus intelligibility of nature. In addition to participating in natural purposiveness through genius, Kant also

¹⁸ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 307.

argues that art appears purposive without a purpose by representing the intelligibility of natural objects. A landscape painting is beautiful because it presents the inherent beauty of an actual landscape (or makes us consider the intelligibility of similar natural formations). Art does not so much create beauty as draw it to our attention.

Kant calls this representational form of beauty ‘accessory’, and distinguishes it from instances of free beauty, where the object is itself beautiful, and not simply the presentation of an external object of beauty.¹⁹ Human art generally falls into the former category, because of both its reliance on the representation of natural beauty, and its use of natural purposiveness through genius. Instrumental music, however, presents a special case, since it is not obviously representational. Kant categorises music as a free, rather than accessory, beauty, a judgement that I have argued makes sense of our aesthetic engagements with musical beauty, but also raises a number of subsequent questions.²⁰ In particular, how is it possible for music to function as free beauty, appearing purposive without a discernible purpose, even though it is a human creation?

One approach has been to deny that music is, in fact, non-representational, and instead maintain that it is an accessory beauty with mimetic content. The most likely candidates for musical representation are emotions and language, which are often combined into the idea that music functions as a ‘language of the emotions’.²¹ I argued that while music shares many of the structural features of natural languages, it is misleading to think of musical meaning in terms of linguistic or emotional representation. In the first place, identifying specific representational content in music generally requires some form of extramusical influence, whether the description accompanying a piece of programmatic music, or the emotional state of the listener. Absent such external determination, musical ‘statements’ are simply too vague to function as a sufficient explanation for music’s meaningfulness. I have suggested that while music seems to afford conceptual interpretations, rather than being defined by these representations, as is the case in accessory beauty, what is interesting about musical beauty is the extent to which it resists conceptual determination. If music involves the presentation of natural beauty, the presentation is also, itself, beautiful.

Related to this argument is the observation that, unlike language, music’s grammar does not define the limits of intelligibility, but instead provides a basis from which to

¹⁹ Ibid., 229.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (Oxford University Press, 1959), 32.

challenge and, in Julian Johnson's terms, transcend its formal structure.²² There is no doubt a close connection between music and language, both in terms of grammatical structure and evolutionary development. Both music and language create intelligibility through the ordered structuring of sound, and there is experimental evidence to suggest that both are processed neurologically in the same areas of the brain.²³ Yet despite the obvious affinity between musical and linguistic constructions of meaningfulness, it is unhelpful to think of music as a representation of language. Music does not use the features it shares with language to construct a representational echo of linguistic communication, but instead to produce an art form that we surprisingly perceive as free rather than accessory beauty.

This is possible because of the unique way in which music's objective form interacts with our subjective perception. As I have indicated, one of the basic features of musical form is the establishment and subversion of our structural expectations; what Johnson refers to as examples of musical transcendence. Such moments typify particularly beautiful and moving music, and are one of the primary features of musical, as opposed to linguistic, form. When we listen within the music — in its own 'musical world' — we experience such moments as instances of the sublime. Music as it unfolds through time is unbounded, and transcendent constructions challenge our attempts to discern music's formal purpose by initially seeming to reflect the contrapurposiveness of the sublime rather than the intelligibility of beauty.

In such cases our initial emotional reaction is actually negative: we dislike having our expectations thwarted. David Huron argues that music is replete with these 'frisson' responses, where we initially experience structural innovations in a negative manner.²⁴ Only in hindsight, once we recall that structural deviations in music tend to serve a larger aesthetic purpose, do we come to have a more positive assessment of these unexpected events. The frisson response is a classic indicator of the Kantian sublime, in which a negative experience of contrapurposiveness is transformed into a positive appraisal of purposiveness, despite the lack objective intelligibility. Despite the fact that a sublime experience thwarts our attempts to perceive it as intelligible, we nevertheless continue to believe that, were it not unbounded, we would be able to

²² Julian Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music?* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 109.

²³ Robbin A. Miranda and Michael T. Ullman, 'Double Dissociation Between Rules and Memory in Music: An Event-Related Potential Study', *Neuroimage* 38:2 (2007).

²⁴ David Brian Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 414.

perceive its purposiveness. Similarly, as we listen within the music's artistic world we attempt to perceive the music as intelligible, yet moments of musical transcendence subvert our predictions of purposiveness. Because musical performances are unbounded, we can only perceive these transgressions as purposive in hindsight, and not as the music unfolds. Music displays all of the characteristics of contrapurposiveness and unboundedness that typify Kant's definition of the sublime.

And yet this poses a challenge, because Kant argues that only nature can provide experiences of sublimity. Again, it is difficult to understand how a human creation, structured according to a purpose that ought to be within human comprehension, can nevertheless seem contrapurposive: unpurposed, but in a paradoxically purposive way. What I have suggested is that music appears sublime when considered within its own musical world, but seems purposive when viewed, as it were, from without. As Kendall Walton notes, unlike the fictional worlds of many other arts, the thought world created by musical forms lacks narrative coherence.²⁵ More importantly, I have argued that it also lacks natural representation. A novel, for example, creates a narrative world that reproduces the features of nature. When characters fall in love or succumb to illness, we understand these ideas because of our experience of love or disease in the 'real' world. Likewise, instances of sublimity that occur within a novel's narrative world are not sublime in themselves, but represent experiences of the sublime in nature. I do not believe that sublimity in music is representative, however, because musical worlds do not themselves represent nature. When we hear moments that evoke a sense of contrapurposiveness or frisson, we are experiencing sublimity directly, and not simply a representation of the natural sublime, even though this experience is confined to the unbounded musical world produced in performance.

At the same time, however, we also listen to the music from outside its musical world, as an object within our wider experience of nature. Viewed from this perspective alone, music not only appears intelligible, but purposed, and its beauty is accessory. We know why composers write music, and we can describe, as, for example, Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff have done, the means by which they do.²⁶ We can still enjoy music when considered in this forensic way, but our pleasure is vastly different from the sublimity we experience when we listen within the musical world. What I

²⁵ Kendall Walton, 'Listening with Imagination', in *Music and Meaning*, ed. J. Robinson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 67.

²⁶ Fred, Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983).

have argued, however, is that in our perception of musical performance *both* perspectives are operative simultaneously, and it is the interaction *between* these internal and external views that leads to our perception of music as free beauty. While the external view provides a foundation of intelligibility, music's internal contrapurposiveness thwarts attempts to discern specific, conceptual purposes. In judgements of the sublime, we do not know that the object is, in fact, purposive; we are only able to subjectively assert our belief that this is the case. When we listen within the music we likewise perceive contrapurposiveness, but we know, from our external perspective, that the music is actually intelligible. Thus, music's internal contrapurposiveness is not perceived as sublime — since we know it to be purposive — but as beautiful; moreover, as a beauty whose purpose cannot be determined, and is consequently free.

3.2. Music's Theological Significance

The unique structure of musical beauty has important implications for understanding the relationship between music and theological knowledge. In the first place, because the combination of internal sublimity and external purposiveness is perceived as free beauty, our aesthetic judgements of music are not directly dependent on the beauty of nature. Rather than involving the beautiful presentation of an external form, like the representational arts, musical beauty is unique and independent. As a consequence, the dependence of our aesthetic judgements of music on the metaphysical *sensus communis* is particularly pronounced. Moreover, because music is internally sublime our internal judgements of its contrapurposiveness are entirely dependent on this common sense; since the sublime, by definition, lacks the objective features of purposiveness. Discerning intelligibility in something that provides no objective basis for such a judgement requires the constitutive activity of the *sensus communis* if such a judgement is also to have universal validity. Thus, in musical beauty we are made particularly aware that our judgements are implicitly related to a metaphysical common sense in two respects: musical beauty is free, not simply the second-order recognition of natural beauty, and it involves judgements of the sublime, which are wholly dependent on the *sensus communis*.

Judgements of musical beauty are closely associated, in a Kantian analysis, with the metaphysical principle he identifies as providing a basis for the universality of aesthetic judgements. While we cannot, from within Kant's epistemological limitations, discern the nature of this standard — including whether it is theological in origin — by assuming a Christian faith perspective we can understand this common sense as

reflecting the relationship between divine and human knowledge: the fact that we know the world to be purposed, yet remain ignorant of the precise shape of God's providence. What we have established, however, is that for judgements of beauty to be universally valid within a human-mind-dependent epistemology they must respond to a standard that falls outside the realm of subjective knowledge. Musical beauty thus functions as a signal of transcendence: something that, because of the way in which it is perceived, implies a dependence on metaphysical knowledge. We could be wrong in ascribing universality to our judgements, but the fact that we do view musical judgements as more than simply opinions implies the existence, even within Kant's stringently subjective epistemological system, of a metaphysical principle acting constitutively within our cognition.

If we do assume a theological perspective that will allow us to investigate the nature of this metaphysical common sense, music's theological significance can be understood on two levels. In the first place, our position relative to music's artistic world is similar to that of God and creation. Through music we create and purpose an independent narrative sphere which, when entered into, allows for limited experiences of the sublime, but when viewed from outside is completely intelligible. This type of God-like relationship to musical worlds explains, at least to some extent, music's long-acknowledged temptation to idolatry. At the same time however, it is only the fact that we create and appreciate music from within the real world that allows us to appreciate it as a free beauty: as something, like nature, that is both purposive and yet without a specific purpose. As Augustine writes in *De musica*, it thus behoves us to use music well, in a way that orients our thoughts towards God rather than the possibility of musical idolatry, for only through our dependence on a *sensus communis* rooted in the fact of God's purposing of the world can we create and enjoy musical beauty.

4. Implications

Before we close, it will be helpful to relate these conclusions to particular issues in musical and theological discourse. As I suggested in the introduction, the value of a Kantian approach must ultimately be demonstrated by its fecundity. Consequently, I would like to consider the products of a Kantian approach to music's theological significance in relation to three specific questions: the nature of musical meaning, the relationship between aesthetic and religious experience, and the value of theological knowledge in an epistemological systems based on the independent human mind.

4.1. Understanding Musical Beauty

One of the central issues in philosophical musicology is the meaning and meaningfulness of music.²⁷ Various possibilities have been debated: whereas Chua and Kramer both focus the social and philosophical construction of meaning, Coker views musical meaning in linguistic terms, Meyer and Raffman through information theory and emotion, and Jankélévitch suggests that music's meaning is irreducibly ineffable. While our approach has been largely formal, owing to the importance of form and teleology in Kant's idea of purposiveness, it can nevertheless make sense of these other semantic theories, thereby providing a means of unifying musicological discussions of meaning. Like language, music appears intelligible, and shares many of the formal structures that typify linguistic grammar. Even so, musical meaning cannot be reduced to linguistic communication or representation, since although music appears intelligible it remains resistant to the imposition of specific conceptual meanings; as Jankélévitch argues, musical meaning remains ineffable. Music seems linguistic, yet does not qualify as a language; it appears intelligible, yet, despite the fact that it is a human creation, defies attempts to determine its conceptual content.

I have argued that this is because music is externally purposive, but internally contrapurposive. Although when viewed from without — as a bounded artistic object — music is wholly intelligible, within its artistic world the music repeatedly defies our expectations, leading to a sense of musical sublimity. It is this internal contrapurposiveness that is described by information theory approaches to musical meaning, such as those proposed by Leonard Meyer and, more recently, David Huron. When music defies our predictions we experience a negative emotional reaction, *frisson*, that is subsequently reinterpreted in positive terms as contrapurposive, and thus sublime. Because music's artistic world, in which these reactions take place, exists only during performance, music retains this sense of contrapurposiveness even after repeated hearings. Thus, we can agree with Meyer that much of music's meaningfulness is conveyed through emotional

²⁷ See, e.g. Thomas Christensen, 'Epistemologies of Music Theory', in *Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); Wilson Coker, *Music and Meaning* (New York: The Free Press, 1972); Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. C. Abbate (Princeton University Press, 2003); Peter Kivy, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002); Lawrence Kramer, *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002); Steven C. Krantz, 'Metaphor in Music', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45:4 (1987); Lerdahl and Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*; Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (University of Chicago Press, 1956); Diana Raffman, *Language, Music, and Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).

elements of surprise, while also noting that because such surprise is experienced within music's artistic world, it remains robust despite repetition. Music's meaningfulness is fundamentally aesthetic rather than a matter of linguistic communication.

This theory of musical meaningfulness explains one of the overlooked characteristics of our aesthetic appreciation of music. Whereas information theory approaches would suggest that our first hearing of a musical work is the most meaningful, I have argued that this is not, experientially, the case. Rather, our enjoyment of a piece increases from our first hearing as we come to understand the external structure of purposiveness to which the music's internal sublimity is related. When we first listen to a composition, we can only experience its internal contrapurposefulness, since judgments of intelligibility require knowledge of the complete, bounded object. We cannot know, for example, that the early recapitulation in the first movement of Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony is purposive within the larger context of the movement because we have not yet heard the entire piece. This ignorance of the whole, in the case of music, does not enhance our aesthetic experience but makes it difficult to appreciate how music is not only internally sublime, but also externally beautiful. In subsequent hearings, however, we are able to understand the music's internal contrapurposefulness within the context of intelligibility provided by our knowledge of the complete work, thus allowing us to perceive music as a free beauty. Our knowledge of the complete work is used, not to dampen our reactions to internal contrapurposefulness, but to provide an external basis of intelligibility that enables music to function as free beauty.

As well as incorporating the work of information theorists, this theory of musical meaning also makes sense of proposals, such as the generative grammar of Lerdahl and Jackendoff, that view musical meaning in grammatical terms. Because music involves the intelligible structuring of sound it shares many of the features of linguistic communication, particularly linguistic syntax, and can thus be analysed in grammatical terms. It is this formal intelligibility that allows us to perceive the formal purposiveness of the musical object. Unlike language, however — which operates within the limits imposed by its grammar — musical grammar provides a formal standard from which the music can defy our expectations and lead to an internal awareness of contrapurposefulness. Linguistic and structural approaches to musical meaning can thus be understood, within our model, as pertaining to the features of music considered objectively — in other words, from the outside — while information theorists focus on the perception of music within its artistic world. Our understanding of musical meaning shows these two contrasting approaches to be, in fact, complementary.

As I have acknowledged, this theory of musical meaning focuses primarily on our cognitive experience of music, and not on its social location. Even so, the idea of musical beauty as purposiveness — as a part of the aesthetic judgement that confirms the correspondence between our minds and the natural world — is inherently related to issues of natural and social context. Musical beauty is perceived as having the same intelligibility that characterises our interactions with the natural world and with other human beings, and is thus intimately connected with the cognitive means whereby we function socially in the world. While natural beauty provides confirmation of our ability to act within nature, music actively produces purposiveness within the world. It thus provides a novel way of understanding, from a philosophical and cognitive perspective, the social aspects of music making. Through music we are united in an artistic world that is wholly purposive, yet, like nature, a free beauty that resists conceptual understanding. Kant equates judgements of purposiveness with emotional reactions, from the simple pleasure and displeasure with which we make judgements of beauty, to the more intense emotions that characterise the sublime. Music's association with emotion can thus be understood as a product of this contextual and social aspect of aesthetic judgements, in which we apply the mental processes and emotional reactions developed to facilitate action within nature to objects of human creation.

4.2. The Relationship between Aesthetics and Religion

Another important question addressed over the course of this thesis is the relationship between aesthetic judgements and religious experience. In the fourth chapter, our concern was to establish that a theological interpretation of Kant's metaphysical common sense would be consistent with both our experience of musical beauty and the psychological features of religious experience. We demonstrated that the *sensus communis* functions in a way that parallels the features of religious experience, and thus can function as the epistemological source of music's theological significance. We did not, however, consider the wider implications of this correlation between aesthetics and religious experience. While Kant saw religious experience and observance as related primarily to our moral activity, and thus to the faculty of practical reason, consensus quickly shifted towards associating our experience of religion with aesthetics. Friedrich Schleiermacher is the first to explicitly institute this change, arguing that the basic feature of religion is not thinking or action, but feeling. As a consequence, religion should be understood through the judicial faculty, and, specifically, aesthetic judgement, which likewise involves feelings that are independent of conceptual de-

termination. In religion we become aware of a 'sense of absolute dependence', a feeling that our discrete and contingent individualities are borne by, in Karl Rahner's terms, an 'incomprehensible ground'.²⁸ Schleiermacher cements the relationship between aesthetics and theology by advocating for the religious significance of the arts. Music is particularly singled out, as ineffable faith conveyed through music is favourable to the doctrinal debates that occupy the church.

The link forged by Schleiermacher between aesthetics and religion has persisted in subsequent discussions of the cognitive aspects characterising religious experience. William James, for example, confirms in his seminal lectures on the *Varieties of Religious Experience* that 'feeling is the deeper source of religion', and, moreover, that music 'is the element through which we are best spoken to by mystical truth'.²⁹ What distinguishes James's approach is its lack of theological content. Whereas Schleiermacher happily discusses the theological implications of our absolute dependence, taking it for granted that this experience indicates the existence of something on which we are absolutely dependent, James takes a more epistemically modest approach. While acknowledging that religious life is characterised by a belief that the visible world is dependent on a more spiritual universe — confirming the connection between religion and a feeling of absolute dependence — he makes no judgement as to whether such a spiritual universe exists. James further observes that this feeling of dependence must be connected with a teleological understanding, and that both must be felt to be personally significant, and not simply academically interesting, for metaphysical claims to rise to the level of religious belief.

A contrary position to this view that religious experience is related to feeling and aesthetic judgement is articulated by Rudolf Otto, who argues that holiness — what he terms the 'numinous' — is characterised by its radical discontinuity with other elements of our experience. Religion is an experience of the 'wholly other', the recognition of which requires the addition of a special numinous faculty to a Kantian understanding of cognition.³⁰ While I am sympathetic to Otto's attempt to assert the importance of transcendence in religious experience, his theories are unconvincing for two reasons. First, even if what we experience in religion is wholly other, we nevertheless experience this

²⁸ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (T&T Clark, 1999), §33; Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, trans. W. V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1978), 79–80.

²⁹ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2004), 372–3, 364.

³⁰ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. J. W. Harbey (Oxford University Press, 1958), 25, 21.

otherness in positive terms: not simply as a void, but as a void with metaphysical significance. It thus seems incoherent, not to mention overly simplistic, to insist that religion is completely discontinuous with other experiences, since it quite patently cannot be. Second, the addition of a numinous faculty to a Kantian understanding of cognition not only creates an unnecessary philosophical complication — since the wholly other *is* a matter of experience — but is also counterproductive if we wish to demonstrate the relevance of theological knowledge for subjective philosophy. Relegating theology to a faculty of the wholly other simply entrenches through systematisation the separation between theology and the rest of human knowledge.

I have suggested that Otto's wholly other is not indicative of another cognitive faculty, but instead represents our experience of religion through the sublime. The key features of the sublime correlate strongly with Otto's description of the numinous. In both cases, the object is unbounded, lying outside the realm of normal human experience, and frustrating our attempts at comprehension. Because the sublime is fundamentally contrapurposive, our judgements of sublimity are particularly dependent on Kant's common sense. Even our perception of beauty, however, requires this metaphysical principle, and it is this dependence of aesthetic judgement on metaphysics that I would suggest accounts for the association between aesthetics and religion. In our judgements of the beautiful and the sublime we experience the *sensus communis* as precisely the type of ground that both Schleiermacher and James identify as one of the basic characteristics of religious experience. Aesthetic judgements are only possible when supported by such a metaphysical foundation. Again, this dependence on the *sensus communis* is particularly evident in our experiences of the sublime, since we have no objective basis for our assertions of purposiveness. Through sublimity we experience this common sense directly as a ground for our subjective perception of purposiveness. This approach explains Otto's insistence that through the numinous we experience that which is wholly other, without requiring the addition of a separate, numinous faculty of cognition. The essence of the sublime is that it defies our attempts to comprehend it, or even perceive its intelligibility. When we do interpret unbounded experiences of contrapurposiveness as sublime, however, we do so according to a metaphysical principle that lies *within* the structure of our aesthetic judgements themselves, and thus can avoid the need for a numinous faculty.

The correspondence between theories of religious experience and the features of aesthetic judgement not only indicates that it is appropriate to interpret Kant's common sense in theological terms, but also that aesthetic judgements and religious expe-

riences — understood epistemologically — both involve a sense of dependence on knowledge that, in Kant's terms, falls into the realm of metaphysics. As Lonergan's work demonstrates, aesthetic judgement is not the only aspect of Kant's human-mind-dependent epistemology that betrays an implicit reliance on the unconditioned: i.e., knowledge beyond the comprehension of our individual human minds. Even so, I have argued that aesthetic judgements function as particularly strong signals of transcendence. In the faculty of understanding the unconditioned provides a basis for the categories of conceptual knowledge; once these have been established, the unconditioned no longer needs to be consulted in judgements of theoretical reason. In contrast, because aesthetic judgements are non-conceptual the unconditioned must be consulted each time we make a determination of beauty; we cannot store conceptual characteristics of purposiveness within our minds, as we can remember the categories of understanding. Thus, we are more likely to consider the relationship between ourselves and, in James's words, 'a more spiritual universe', through our aesthetic judgements rather than the operation of theoretical or practical reason.

Consequently, while aesthetic judgements are not identical with religious experience, their non-conceptuality emphasises the implicit dependence of human thought on metaphysical knowledge, thus leading to a close association between aesthetics and religion. Music, I have suggested, is particularly capable of emphasising this metaphysical dimension, and it is this that accounts, on an epistemological level, for the sense that it is theologically loaded. Even so, the presence of signals of transcendence within Kant's human-mind-dependent epistemology, both in the context of aesthetic judgements and, according to Lonergan, in our theoretical reason, indicates that religious experiences in which human knowledge is understood in relation to a 'spiritual universe' are perfectly justifiable even in a system where knowledge is constructed by individual human minds. While we cannot know that instances of metaphysical dependence are in fact theological, or even that any metaphysical explanation exists, we also are unable to rule out religious interpretations.

4.3. Theological Knowledge in a Subjective Epistemology

Crucially, how we choose to understand these signals of transcendence directly affects our cognition within a subjective epistemology: it makes a difference whether the *sensus communis* is related to the Christian God or a humanist concept of human nature. When considering individual aesthetic judgements, metaphysical agnosticism becomes an untenable position if we also wish to assert the universality of such judge-

ments. At the very least, we must believe that there is a metaphysical principle of purposiveness that is valid across all individual human minds, and that our judgement is consistent with this common sense. Such beliefs, however, raise a host of attendant issues. What, for example, is the moral status of this common sense? Is it an intolerable claim to power by some group or deity, causing beauty to become a reminder of subjugation? What is the relationship between cognitive intelligibility and the purposiveness we perceive in the natural world? Can we identify, in conceptual terms, limitations on what can be considered beautiful? Is beauty something that evolves with human cognition, or a standard we grow into relation with? While these questions and others are beyond the scope of this thesis to address, they provide an indication of the types of issues that directly affect how we perceive musical beauty, and can only be answered through the assumption of a metaphysical position.

The appropriate role of metaphysical knowledge in musical analysis has been a subject of recent musicological discussion. Metaphysical theories have formed the basis of musical analysis for most of the development of Western music: in addition to the idea of a 'harmony of the spheres', which dominated Classical and Medieval musical thought, there have also been metaphysical aspects to later theories, such as Jean-Philippe Rameau's (1683–1764) *corps sonore* and Heinrich Schenker's (1868–1935) view that music can be understood as the prolongation of its tonic triad. Even so, there is an embarrassment in modern musicology — particularly in relation to Schenker, whose method of analysis is particularly prominent in American musicology — over these associations with metaphysical claims. In the English edition of Schenker's *Free Composition*, for example, the editors Jonas and Oster went so far as to remove sections that discussed the metaphysical basis for his method of analysis, in which he used such claims to support judgements of particular works and composers. Nicholas Cook typifies the musicological response: 'Such views are no longer acceptable and form no part of present-day Schenkerian analysis'.³¹ More recently, Fred Lerdahl provoked a storm of controversy by suggesting that nature provides cognitive constraints to the structures of music we find beautiful, resulting in a vitriolic exchange with James Boros across two issues of *Perspectives of New Music*.³²

³¹ Nicholas Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis* (New York: George Braziller, 1987), 58.

³² James Boros, 'A "New Tonality"?', *Perspectives of New Music* 33:1/2 (1995); Fred Lerdahl, 'Tonality and Paranoia: A Reply to Boros', *Perspectives of New Music* 34:1 (1996); James Boros, 'A Response to Lerdahl', *Perspectives of New Music* 34:1 (1996). For the original article, see Fred Lerdahl, 'Cognitive Constraints on Compositional Systems', *Contemporary Music Review* 6:2 (1992).

While I am not interested in defending any of these particular appeals to metaphysics, what our analysis of musical beauty in the light of Kantian aesthetics demonstrates is the inseparability of musical understanding from metaphysical knowledge. Some of the practical effects of musicology's denial of metanarratives have already been identified by Kevin Korsyn, who asks, 'How can "we" have a research community when there is no "we", when the master narrative authorising that "we" no longer commands belief?'³³ While a lack of metanarratives has a fragmenting effect on musicology as a discipline, more importantly it leaves us unable to discuss our judgements of musical beauty, which are inextricably dependent on a metaphysical standard that ensures their objective validity. As I have acknowledged, we can dispense with the need for a common sense by simply denying that we do, in fact, intend our judgements of beauty to be universal. While this position is philosophically coherent, it is in conflict with our empirical experience of musical beauty, in which aesthetic judgements are distinguished from the merely pleasurable by precisely this universal aspect. If musical beauty is a universal property, then we must posit a metaphysical principle that allows us to make such determinations consistently, yet not according to any specific concept, such as perfection. As Lonergan observes, we may not be able to logically prove the existence of such a principle, but we can nevertheless experience it directly.

What this analysis indicates is that even within the strictly subjective epistemology of transcendental idealism we cannot accurately describe our experience of aesthetic judgements without relying on knowledge that is not actively constructed by our cognition, but discovered in a metaphysical common sense. While it is possible to approach all potential understandings of this metaphysical standard with critical scepticism, any positive account of musical beauty that is consistent with our experience of aesthetic judgements as universally valid will require the assumption of metaphysical knowledge. Thus, while Lerdahl may not have any epistemological basis from which to defend his views about the origin and conceptual characteristics of our ability to discern purposiveness, his example demonstrates the necessity of taking a position with respect to the metaphysical basis of aesthetic judgement if we are to develop universal, normative theories of musical beauty. Where Lerdahl falls afoul of critics like Boros is in suggesting that his metaphysical claims, because they are based on psychological theories, can be known within a human-mind-dependent epistemology to be true. Universal standards of aesthetic judgement are, by definition, beyond philosophical

³³ Kevin Korsyn, *Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Musical Research* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 20.

justification in such a system, and thus can only be proposed as possible explanations, albeit ones that within a particular set of metaphysical assumptions seem compelling.

In Korsyn's words, then, musicology does need to be 'capable of accepting and nurturing otherness', since such otherness — in the form of metaphysical assumptions — is required if we are to know anything positive about the nature of musical beauty.³⁴ At the same time, however, we must recognise that within a set of metaphysical assumptions the conclusions drawn are not simply a suggestion of what might be the case, but deductively valid accounts of what *is* the case *if* such assumptions are true. Thus, while we should accept Korsyn's affirmation of pluralism within an epistemological context shaped by the subjective construction of knowledge, we should not use the limitations of such a system to dismiss the importance of assuming a particular metaphysical perspective, since on an individual level such a choice is required. Within the limitations of human-mind-dependent knowledge we may not be able to prove, for example, that a Christian perspective is true, but that does not give us license to conclude either that metaphysical knowledge is irrelevant, or that all metaphysical systems lead to the same aesthetic conclusions.

The irreducible importance of metaphysical knowledge in subjective accounts of aesthetic judgement also has implications for the way in which theologians approach the twin problems posed by the epistemological claims of modern and postmodern thought: that God-talk is both impossible and irrelevant. To the first problem, I have suggested that a combination of Kaufman's account of theological discourse with Lindbeck's emphasis on faith contexts provides a way of understanding theology that is both consistent with human-mind-dependent knowledge and allows for the possibility of revelation. To the second, our analysis of the *sensus communis* in judgements of musical beauty indicates that it is possible for theology to engage with systems in which knowledge is dependent on the construction of individual human minds directly, without reacting defensively, ignoring the problem, or subsuming theological discourse to the limitations of human cognition and experience. Theological knowledge cannot be induced from our experience, since it belongs to the realm of metaphysics: knowledge that is consistent with, but not demonstrable from, the possibility of empirical observation. At the same time, the universality of our aesthetic judgements requires knowledge that can only be understood once a metaphysical, e.g.,

³⁴ Ibid., 176.

theological, perspective is assumed. Theological conclusions are thus directly relevant to knowledge within a subjective epistemological system.

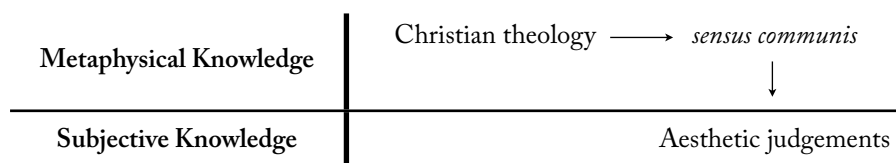


Fig. 1 — Table showing the division between what is knowable within a human-mind-dependent epistemology (subjective knowledge), and its relationship to metaphysics. The *sensus communis* functions constitutively in our aesthetic judgements, but can only be analysed by assuming a particular metaphysical case; in this example, Christian theology.

This paradigm — in which signals of transcendence are used as a means of interfacing between theology and other disciplines — may seem cumbersome, but it has the advantage of highlighting the relevance of theological discourse even within contexts shaped by human-mind-dependent epistemologies. While we may need to re-evaluate the distinction between noumena and phenomena in perception, or the central claim that knowledge is constructed by the individual human mind, we can nevertheless begin to analyse the relationship between theology and elements of experience, such as our experiences of musical beauty, without first requiring such profound revisions. Musical beauty, even within Kant's stringent subjective epistemology, is dependent on a metaphysical common sense, and can thus be understood within a Christian perspective as dependent on knowledge of God without requiring the additional assumption of an Augustinian or realist metaphysic.

5. Understanding Music's Theological Significance

At the beginning of this chapter, I noted the importance of Augustine's *De musica* in the formulation of the idea that music's theological significance might operate, at least to some extent, on an epistemological level; that musical beauty might be related to knowledge of God, and that this relationship could account for the sense that music is theologically loaded. Augustine's goal, however, is not to identify a theological reason for music's association with religious experiences, but to explore how the contemplation of music can lead us to God; his primary concern is not to show how theological knowledge shapes our understanding of music, but how our understanding of music can orient our thoughts towards the source of all knowledge and truth. *De musica* is an ascent from the experience of musical beauty to a meditation on God as ultimate

beauty.³⁵ In contrast, our investigation has been more in the nature of a descent: having established the relevance of metaphysical knowledge for our understanding of musical beauty, we then provided a theological interpretation of what this knowledge is, and how it might contribute to music's sense of theological significance. Surely music's true theological significance lies in its ability to facilitate devotion, rather than its epistemological dependence on theological knowledge. Yet by examining in more analytical terms the nature of musical beauty we have reached conclusions that will hopefully enrich the thought of those who would wish, as Augustine did, to 'use music well'.³⁶ Even within the constraints of a subjective epistemological system, musical beauty repeatedly directs our attention to the dependence of our aesthetic judgements on a metaphysical common sense; which, understood in Christian terms, reflects both the transcendence and providential activity of God. Thus, while this thesis may not constitute an ascent to God, it has suggested a way of understanding how music can itself lead to contemplation of the divine.

³⁵ For a discussion of the Medieval meditative ascent, see Robert McMahon, *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent: Augustine, Anselm, Boethius & Dante* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

³⁶ Augustine *De musica*, 6.14.46.

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